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ABSTRACT

This study investigated adult students who completed an instructional program that included training in employability and job readiness. It identified and analyzed program completers' perceptions of the instruction they received and the employability skill levels and benefits gained as a result of their program participation. Data were collected from 85 community college students using a questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions. Information collected included demographics, reasons for seeking training, current employment status, and impressions of the training services offered by the program. Respondents were categorized by employment school enrollment status at the time the surveys were completed. The respondents were 92% female and ranged in age from 20-54; 73% reported having a work history, 71% were receiving public assistance, and 59% were enrolled in a school or training program. The most popular reasons for enrolling in the program were to continue education (68%), to learn new skills (61%), and to seek employment (55%). A great majority of the completers indicated that the instruction was useful; many found that their skills in seven major areas identified by the literature had improved. Overall, the findings point to a positive perception of employability skills on the part of the participants who completed the program. Contains 42 references. (CAK)

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ED 429 655

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS LEARNED IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE JOB READINESS TRAINING PROGRAM

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the School of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

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University of Pittsburgh

1997

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Thomas F. Staszewski, Ed.D.

University of Pittsburgh, 1997

Adviser: Dr. John C. Weidman

This study investigated adult students who completed an instructional program that included training in employability and job readiness. It identified and analyzed perceptions by program completers of their impressions of the instruction they received. Students who completed the program were asked about their perceptions of current employability skills levels and benefits gained as a result of their participation in the program. This study provides insight into participants' perceptions of the usefulness of the training, skills learned and benefits gained from participation. Comments, recommendations and suggestions from the participants are also offered.

Data were collected with a survey questionnaire that used closed and open-ended questions to determine perceptions about the program's services and preparation for further education or job placement. The population consisted of 150 adult students who completed a community college sponsored job readiness program funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). From the population of 150 former students, 85 surveys were completed for a response rate of 56.7%.

This study's literature review documented that the workplace of today has undergone substantial change and there is now an increased need for higher skill levels of employees. Precedent setting changes have led to dramatic developments in employer and employee expectations and demands. Information is also presented relating to a profile of employability skills necessary to enter or re-enter the job market.

Results of the survey provide data about demographic characteristics, information regarding reasons for seeking training, current status of employment or school enrollment, and also impressions, opinions and perceptions of the training and services offered by the program. Each respondent was placed into groups based on employment and school enrollment status at the time the survey was completed. The groupings allowed the study to examine differences in the perceptions according to their status.

This study provides information for use in the areas of program planning, curriculum design, and decision making as it pertains to training the unemployed in related employability skills and job readiness preparation. The findings generated provide insight into viewpoints concerning their experiences. Discussion is provided that summarizes the findings and offers implications as well as recommendations.

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Data were collected by means of a survey questionnaire, developed for purposes of this study, that used closed and open-ended questions to determine perceptions about the program's services and preparation for further education or job placement. The population consisted of 150 adult students who completed a community college sponsored job readiness program funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). From the population of 150 former students, 85 surveys were completed for a response rate of 56.7%.

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Results of the survey of the program completers provide data about their demographic characteristics, information regarding reasons for seeking training, their current status of employment or school enrollment, and also impressions, opinions and perceptions of the training and services offered by the program. In addition, each respondent was placed into groups based on employment and school enrollment status at the time the survey was completed. The groupings allowed the study to examine differences in the perceptions according to their current status. Significant differences were found in five areas related to the perceptions of the employment group and in two areas related to the perceptions of the school enrollment group.

This study provides information that can be used in the areas of program planning, curriculum design, and possible decision making as it pertains to training the unemployed in related employability skills and job readiness preparation. The findings generated provide further insight into viewpoints concerning their experiences. Discussion is provided that summarizes the findings and offers implications as well as recommendations for further research.

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I extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to God, and to all those who encouraged and assisted me in this monumental task of doctoral level work. Along the way to finally completing this project, there were many individuals, friends, associates, colleagues and family members too numerous to name who provided me with energy and encouragement.

I wish to express my genuine thankfulness and appreciation to the members of my doctoral committee: Dr. John C. Weidman, my chairperson and academic advisor; Dr. Glenn M. Nelson; Dr. Rita M. Bean; and Dr. James E. Mauch. I am deeply indebted to all of you. In addition, a note of thanks to Dr. Bruce A. Jones for his assistance in the earlier formation phase of this study.

I also thank my colleagues, friends and administrators at the Community College of Allegheny County for their backing and the flow of ideas. In particular, to Dr. Kenneth H. Garrison for the motivation to continue with this pursuit and to Douglas J. Jensen for advocating this undertaking. All past students and members of my pilot study group of former students also deserve special thanks: David Dettore, Kerry Daniels, David Leskanic, and Kenyat Jones.

My mother and father were also instrumental in my pursuit of this degree. To my mother, Dorothy Staszewski, and my father, Harry J. Staszewski, Sr., I am forever indebted for their love, guidance and enduring support. My parents always stressed that education is the best investment possible because it will open doors of opportunity and no one can take away an education once it is acquired. Thanks Mom and Dad!

Finally and most importantly, "my wife and best friend," in fact the greatest person I've ever known, Linda Laird Staszewski, deserves my most heartfelt love and admiration for always being there. This ultimate educational goal could not have been accomplished without her love and understanding. Thanks Linda!

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today's workforce is in a period of change and transition. Major advances in technology, a shift to an information and service based work setting, and continuous downsizing of management positions have all led to changes in the role of the individual worker.

The U.S. Department of Labor (1992) addressed the change that has occurred in the work site. A comparison is made between the "old workplace" and the "new high-performance workplace." The following differences are presented:

> The old workplace could not use, and in fact did not want, too much creativity or ingenuity among the workforce. A small number of people acted as decision makers--gathering and sifting information, setting up systems, organizing workflow and office arrangements, manipulating data to solve problems, and, above all, handing out orders to govern the minute-to-minute actions of employees. Workers needed enough education to read, write, and comprehend instructions. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992, pp. 11 and 12)
>
> But in the emerging high-performance workplace virtually everyone acts as a decision maker, gathers and sifts information, sets up and troubleshoots systems, organizes workflow and team arrangements, manipulates data to solve problems, and, on occasion, provides directions to colleagues. Modern work is just too complex for a small cadre of managers to process all the answers. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992, p. 12)

To better prepare employees for the new workplace, a job training program was developed at the Community College of Allegheny County to address the preparation of the unemployed for new and emerging worker roles. This study investigated participants' perceptions of job readiness skills learned while enrolled in the program.

A. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the topic of employability training and job readiness, as it relates to adult students who completed training in an instructional program. It examined the development of a job readiness profile of employability skills necessary to enter or re-enter the job market. This study identified and analyzed perceptions of program completers as to their impressions of the instruction they received. Students who completed the program were asked about their perceptions of current employability skill levels and benefits gained as a result of classroom instruction.

B. Research Questions

Specific research questions of this study were:

1. What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:
    a. Usefulness of the instruction and training they received while in the program?
    b. Skills acquired by participating in the program, including helpfulness in preparing for continuing education or job search activities? (In the areas of: (1) reading, writing, and computation, (2) communication skills, (3) learning-to-learn skills, including problem solving and creative thinking,

(4) self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting, (5) teamwork skills, (6) leadership skills, and (7) organizational effectiveness.)

c. Benefits that they received by attending and completing the program?

2. What recommendations do the program completers have concerning the type of instruction and training the program offers?

3. Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?

C. Delimitations

This study was delimited to one Job Readiness Training Program located in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, in a community college setting and to the responses given on the questionnaire.

The population for this study was restricted to those individuals who completed the training program during the 1994-96 calendar years.

D. Definition of Terms

1. Community College: A college typically created to meet the educational needs of a particular community and offering two year training, either terminal or preparatory, in professional and liberal arts fields; most

community colleges are publicly controlled and are coeducational (Good, 1973).

2. Curriculum Design: A process of conceptualizing a set of systematic relationships among pupils, teacher behavior, materials, content, time, and instructional outcomes; a guide for instruction describing a specific arrangement of all factors relating to instructional practice toward specific outcomes (Good, 1973).
3. Job Readiness Profile: A profile of skills necessary to successfully enter or re-enter the job market.
4. Job Readiness Training Program: A federally funded grant program offering classroom instruction in job readiness and employability skills.
5. Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA): A federal program that provides education and training opportunities to eligible participants. The U.S. Department of Labor oversees the funds on a national level. Eligibility is determined by various low-income, disadvantaged and unemployed categories. The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 went into effect in October 1983. Its objective is to bring the jobless into permanent, unsubsidized, and self-sustaining employment through training programs and educational opportunities.

E. Significance of the Study

This study provides information relating to employability skills necessary to enter or re-enter the job market. Data were generated from unemployed adult students who participated in a job readiness training program. This study provides insight into participants' perceptions of skills gained through involvement in the educational program. It is hoped this information will be beneficial to educators, program directors, program developers, administrators, trainers, instructional staff and funding sources who deal with unemployed adult students.

This study could be of particular value to job training programs. Instructors may then more adequately incorporate in the classroom instruction in job relevant skills and qualities necessary for success in today's job market.

The results of this study may be important to personnel who must function within the realms of their experience and offer programs to the unemployed that will best meet the needs of the students they encounter. In addition, the study may assist job training programs that are involved with the education and training of the jobless. It is hoped that the findings of this study may provide data upon which recommendations for curriculum decisions, modifications, and training program designs can be made.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During the decade of the 1990s, new trends have arisen in the workplace. Precedent setting changes have led to dramatic and remarkable developments in employer and employee expectations and demands. Today's employers are expecting more and more from the individual worker. Success as an employee in the workforce is dependent on the possession of various skills, traits, characteristics, attitudes and attributes necessary to function in a job setting.

During the past five years, a variety of research studies has produced evidence about what today's employers are expecting of employees. This section of the study addresses research findings offering a "profile" of necessary job related qualities. As we approach the next century, change will continue to occur at a rapid rate. Worker education, training and retraining are vital areas of concern.

Levin and Rumberger (1989) have suggested a new set of worker competencies. According to these authors, the following skills are mandatory for the workforce of the future:

1. Initiative: the motivation and creative ability to think and act independently.
2. Cooperation: productive, goal-directed interaction with others.
3. Peer training: coaching, advising, and training of peers, both formally and informally.

4. Evaluation: assessment and appraisal of a certain product or service.

5. Communication: correct use of verbal, written, and physical communication as well as proper listening, reading comprehension, and interpretive skills.

6. Reasoning: use of both inductive and deductive approaches to the evaluation and formation of logical arguments.

7. Problem-solving: identification of problems, generation of alternative solutions and their ramifications, selection of solutions and subsequent implementation.

8. Decision-making: application of problem-solving skills on a continuous basis.

9. Obtaining and using information: selecting relevant information, knowing where and how to secure it, and utilizing it appropriately.

10. Planning: establishing of goals as well as the prioritizing of activities.

11. Learning skills: cognitive and flexible skills that assist in the acquisition of new knowledge as needed.

12. Multicultural skills: understanding different languages, communication styles, and values in order to interact successfully with persons of other cultures. (pp. 205-208)

A. Achieving Necessary Skills of Tomorrow - Today

A project to identify skills for workplace success was undertaken by the United States' Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). This report indicated that workers of tomorrow must have the following types of skills (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992):

1. Resource management: identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources.
2. Interpersonal: works with others.

3. Information: acquires and uses information.
4. Systems: understands complex interrelationships.
5. Technology: works with a variety of technologies.

Teaching and learning these skills must become an integral part of our schools and our students. The SCANS research also identified a three-part foundation of intellectual skills and personal qualities that must also become an integral part of each of the five competencies. These include:

1. Basic Skills: reading, writing, mathematics (arithmetical computation and mathematical reasoning), listening, and speaking.
2. Thinking Skills: creative thinking, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning.
3. Personal Qualities: individual responsibility as well as self-esteem, social ability, self-management, and integrity. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992, p. 6).

According to Workforce 2000, prepared by the Hudson Institute (1987), the skills for the workplace of the future include:

1. Learning to learn.
2. Competence (reading, writing, computation).
3. Communication.
4. Personal management.
5. Adaptability.
6. Group effectiveness.

The Virginia State Department of Education (1993) identified eight key areas of worker competencies. The skills needed for future entry-level workers (defined as five years from the present) are as follows:

1. Reasoning and problem solving: identify problems; formulate and reach decisions logically; determine what is needed to accomplish work assignment.
2. Speaking and listening: participate effectively in discussions; understand the intent and details of oral communications; communicate in standard English.
3. Principles of teamwork: participate as team member toward a common goal; offer and accept criticism constructively; interact in a socially appropriate manner.
4. Personal work habits: exhibit a willingness to learn; exhibit a positive attitude toward work and pride in accomplishment; exhibit self-discipline, including regular and punctual attendance and dependability.
5. Reading: verify information; note details and facts; assimilate the contents of technical documents and memos.
6. Writing: gather information necessary for a purpose; organize information in a logical and coherent manner; document repair problems and action taken.
7. Computation: add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, decimals, and fractions accurately; calculate using information obtained from charts, graphs, and tables; determine the cost, time or resources necessary for a task.
8. Business principles: understand the roles of money, capital investment, product pricing, cost, profit and productivity; understand supply and demand in a free market system; understand the political, economic and social systems of the United States and other countries.

A number of conclusions may be drawn about changes in the workplace from thé present to the future. There will be:

- A shift from task to project.

- An increase in teamwork.
- An ability to work without direct supervision.
- An increase in worker flexibility.
- A requirement that workers be willing to learn.
- A mastery of traditional basic academic skills as a starting point for job success.
- A higher level of cognitive ability required for workers.
- A movement toward individual responsibility, toward workers as stakeholders.
- An increased understanding of global economic principles. (Virginia State Department of Education, 1993, pp. 16-17)

The American Society for Training and Development (1983) emphasized the importance of "learning how to learn" as the foundation of 16 necessary workplace skills. The 16 skills were divided into the following seven categories:

1. The foundation: learning how to learn.
2. Basic competency skills: reading, writing and computation.
3. Communication: speaking and listening.
4. Adaptability: problem solving and thinking creatively.
5. Developmental skills: self-esteem, motivation and goal setting, and career development, planning.
6. Group effectiveness skills: interpersonal skills, teamwork, and negotiation.
7. Influencing skills: understanding organizational structure and sharing leadership.

B. Core Competencies

The National Academy of Sciences' (1984) survey of American businesses isolated ten "Core Competencies" required of all workers, regardless of education or specialty. The panel consisted of employers, labor union representatives, scholars and educators. The panel summarized its results into three basic findings:

1. The major asset required in the workforce is the ability to learn new knowledge and skills to adapt to the rapidly changing workplace;
2. The Core Competencies are required at all levels in the workforce; and
3. Positive attitudes and sound work habits are especially valued by employers.

The ten "Core Competencies" identified in the study included the following: command of the English language, reasoning and problem solving, reading, writing, computation, science and technology, oral communication, interpersonal relationships, social and economic studies, and personal work habits.

Carnevale, Gainer, and Metzer (1990) identified seven skills groups needed for today's work sites. They are:

> 1. Learning to learn: Employers are frequently shifting employees between jobs and responsibilities, "putting a premium on the ability to absorb, process and apply new information quickly and effectively."
>
> 2. Listening and oral communications: Fifty-five percent of time spent in communicating is spent listening, but schools offer "scant

instruction" in oral communication or listening.

3. Competence in reading, writing and computation: "Most employers today cannot compete successfully without a workforce that has sound basic academic skill." Although schools frequently teach isolated reading, writing or computational skills, use of these skills on the job will require additional proficiency in summarizing information, monitoring one's own work, and using analytical and critical thinking skills.

4. Adaptability--creative thinking and problem solving: An organization's ability to succeed depends on using creative thinking to solve problems and overcome barriers, thus placing a premium on workers who develop such skills.

5. Personal management--self-esteem, goal setting/motivation, and personal/career development: Taking pride in work accomplished, setting goals and meeting them, and enhancing job skills to meet new challenges are necessary characteristics of employees. "Unfortunately, the educational system provides little formal training" to develop such attributes.

6. Group effectiveness--interpersonal skills, negotiation and teamwork: The ability to work cooperatively in teams is increasingly important for workplace success.

7. Organizational effectiveness and leadership: Employers want employees to "have some sense of where the organization is headed and what they must do to make a contribution . . . and who can assume responsibility and motivate co-workers." (Carnevale et al., 1990, pp. 17-34)

C. Job Readiness Skills

Barton (1990) examined a series of studies which established the importance of job readiness skills. Employers want employees with cognitive and subject matter skills and other skills as well. Readiness for employment is an issue related to productivity and is increasingly seen as a solution to successful competition in today's international markets.

Higher order skills are necessary to assist in creating a workforce with the capabilities to meet the tough challenge of world competition.

The U.S. Department of Labor (1993) profiled various national models of the implementation of employability skills education and instruction into schools and training programs. In the state of Michigan, for example, the Governor's Commission on Jobs and Economic Development convened the Employability Skills Task Force to identify the skills that Michigan employers view as essential to success in the modern workplace. The task force defined important workplace skills in three categories. The categories are:

- Academic skills such as skills in communications, comprehension, quantitative learning, critical thinking, science, and technology. (Understanding spoken language and speaking in the language in which business is conducted; reading written materials, including charts, graphs, and displays; writing in the language in which business is conducted; and thinking and acting logically by using the steps of the scientific method--identifying problems, collecting information, forming opinions, and drawing conclusions.)
- Personal management skills such as setting goals and implementing strategies to achieve them, identifying and acting upon personal values, and demonstrating self-discipline. (Demonstrating in the workplace such personal values and ethics as honesty, fairness, and respect for others; exercising a sense of responsibility; demonstrating self-control; and identifying and suggesting new ideas.)
- Teamwork skills such as skills in interpersonal relationships, organization, negotiation, creativity/innovation, and leadership. (Identifying with the goals, norms, values, customs, and cultures of the work group; using a team approach to identify problems and devising solutions; functioning

> in changing work settings and groups; and showing sensitivity to the needs of women and ethnic and racial minorities. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993, p. 60)

D. Workforce Readiness--Beyond the 3 R's

Carnevale et al. (1990) stressed the need for a high level and expanded possession of basic skills. Referring to the emergence of new standards for competency at work, the authors noted:

> Today's workplace demands not only a good command of the three R's, but more. Employers want a new kind of worker with a broad set of workplace skills--or at least a strong foundation in the basics that will facilitate learning on the job.
>
> For employers, the basic workplace skills challenge has been coming into focus for some time. Reading, writing, and math deficiencies have been the first to appear in the workplace; but increasingly, skills such as problem solving, listening, negotiation, and knowing how to learn, as well as teamwork, self-esteem, leadership and motivation/goal setting, organizational effectiveness, employability/career development, oral and listening skills, and creative thinking are also viewed as essential. (p. 2)

E. Producing a High Quality Labor Force

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1986) addressed a measurement of skills necessary for producing a quality labor force. Findings of the NAEP indicate that employers are looking for employees with basic academic skills, but they are looking for much more than the traditional basics. School-based proficiency is often different than work settings.

A Report of the Panel on Secondary School Education for the Changing Workplace (1984) defined the core workforce competencies as:

- Command of the English language
- Reasoning and problem solving
- Creative thinking/problem solving
- Interpersonal/negotiation/teamwork
- Self-esteem/goal setting-motivation/personal and career development
- Organizational effectiveness/leadership

Carnevale et al. (1990) contend that the decentralization of work organizations has led to a different type of worker that is needed. Pointing out the emergence of new decentralized institutions, the authors stressed the following:

> Employees of the new institution need significantly higher basic skills. The new autonomous workers must have personal management skills to maintain self-esteem, set goals, and be motivated. As full members of an autonomous working team, these employees need higher levels of interpersonal, teamwork, negotiation, and organizational skills, skills that enhance group effectiveness. (p. 11)

John (1994) reported on findings of a task force which researched job markets and identified skills and characteristics desired by employers. Employers from all sectors of the community--manufacturing, service, retail and government--identified the same "wish list" of skills and attributes in new employees: problem-solving, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, communication skills, dependability, positive attitude and good grooming. These skills are above and beyond traditional academic skills and are required by many of today's employers.

West (1995) reported on findings of a survey of American workers conducted by the U.S. Departments of Education and

Labor. The first phase of the National Job Analysis Study identified skills that employees themselves said were more frequently necessary in their work. The skills include using a computer; determining the priority of tasks; collaborating with people in other departments; judging the importance, quality, and accuracy of information; and coordinating individual work with the activities of other workers. These findings tend to provide concrete evidence of specific skill areas which contribute to workplace productivity.

The National Alliance of Business (1995) described the workplace of today as being increasingly more demanding and that workers are required to learn a multitude of new skills. A high-quality workforce needs workers with such skills as critical thinking, problem solving and working with others. In many job settings, there is a lack of workers with these necessary skills. Even among recent college graduates, there are deficiencies in workplace skills. The Alliance reported the following:

> Corporate leaders agree that graduates are deficient in a number of areas, including leadership and communication skills; quantification skills, interpersonal relations and the ability to work in teams; the understanding needed to work with a diverse workforce at home and abroad; and the capacity to adapt to rapid change. (National Alliance of Business, 1995, p. 3)

F. The Skills Employers Want

The basic workplace skills that employers want tend to include the basic skills associated with formal schooling, such as reading, writing and computation. But these skills are simply the beginning. Carnevale et al. (1990) summarize:

Learning how to learn is the most basic of all skills because it is related to lifelong learning. Equipped with learning skills, a worker can achieve competency in other workplace areas. Employers look favorably at an employee who knows how to learn and can master new situations. With learning skills, time and other resources spent on training can be reduced.

Reading, writing, and computation are fundamental to achieving success in the workplace. The workplace of the past could accommodate low academic skills because many jobs required only the ability to learn a regularized or repetitive task. In contrast, today's workers often interface with sophisticated, automated, and computerized equipment that requires higher order thinking skills.

Creative thinking and problem solving skills are necessary to allow an organization to respond quickly and effectively to changing economic conditions and competition factors.

Self-esteem, motivation, goal setting, and employability/career development skills are now being recognized as essential for worker and organizational success. Individual effectiveness in the workplace can be linked directly to positive self-esteem and motivation. A good self-image helps employees to take pride in their work. Goal setting enables the worker to set and meet production quotas and deadlines.

Whenever people work together, successful interaction and cooperation depends on effective interpersonal skills, focused negotiation, and productive teamwork. The quality and effectiveness of these skills defines and controls working relationships. The team approach is quite common in today's workforce, and it has been linked to increased productivity and product quality. Responding to rapid change usually depends on the ability of employees to pull together, to cooperate, and refocus on a new common goal.

Employers want employees to have a basic level of skill in organizational effectiveness and leadership. For organizational effectiveness to occur, employees need a sense of its workings and of how their individual and team actions affect strategic objectives.

O'Neil (1995) reported on the emergence of today's competitive job market, the changing economy and the need for a relevant training curriculum that focuses on necessary employability skills. With regard to the types of skills now required, the article stated that:

> We've moved from an industrial-based economy to a technological information-based economy. In 1950, 60 percent of the jobs in the nation were unskilled compared to 33 percent today and only 15 percent by the year 2000. The unskilled jobs are disappearing, and the workplace is being transformed. Increasingly, employees from entry-level workers to senior management need the ability to use a wide array of knowledge, to access information, and to manipulate data. The workplace today demands very different skills than the workplace of 1950 did.
>
> But if you look at our typical curriculums, they haven't changed that much since 1950. Then and now, they were developed for the purposes of building intellectual capacity and transmission of culture. Those are worthy aims, but schools have to do more than that. (p. 46)

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Today, unskilled and low-skill jobs are rapidly disappearing, primarily through the advancement of technology. To better prepare for the impact of the changing workforce, a more applied curriculum that is relevant to needs of the job setting is recommended.

Jones (1996) noted that the new workplace has led to changes that have increased company and individual learning investments and expanded the demand for training and education. As we approach the next century, Jones points out that:

> American businesses are facing new and unprecedented challenges. Competition, deregulation, shortened technological and product life cycles, and new competitive standards are restructuring entire industries and reshaping how companies organize their workplace and how companies manage and train their workforces.
>
> In the accelerated labor market of the next century, companies will constantly be looking for best and latest but will not necessarily offer a permanent home to the workers who possess them. To flourish, workers will need two things above all: first, constant access to new knowledge that will enhance their value in the market; and second, skills credentials enabling them to move efficiently and effectively within the labor market. (p. 21)

It seems to be suggested that there remains a gap between achievement levels of American graduates and employer requirements. With the workplace demanding higher skills, the gap is likely to continue to grow, unless improvements occur in the reshaping of curricula to reflect employer needs.

In addition, Jones (1996) contends that nationwide, community colleges are already playing a central role in skill training, and will become a resource for lifelong learning, as well as working with employers to provide training and retraining. Today there is a realization that workers need more education and in a more lifelong continual fashion. Community colleges are providing an important role in responding to this increased demand for training.

Waddell (1991) describes a variety of work-related situations that present many challenges to educators and employers. Among a variety of developments mentioned are tremendous technological advancements and the impact of the global marketplace. Many employers are concerned about the increasing difficulty of finding skilled employees. Waddell details that there exists a heightened level of skill and sophistication required to enter and be successful in the present and future work environment. She strongly suggests that steps must be taken to expand and enrich the training that is offered and provided by the educational systems. In addition she is in favor of increasing partnerships between industry and education to obtain the resources and support for reframing training within the context of higher education. Therefore, this suggests that training programs need to be more relevant and applicable to the realities of a highly skilled workplace.

Waddell (1991) further states that the on-going changes in the complexity of jobs, a decline of skilled workers, and organizational restructuring have dramatic implications for workforce development. As a proponent of the community college system, she writes that many community colleges have experienced great success in providing workforce development training programs through the utilization of flexibility, adaptability, diversity and quick responsiveness to change.

Gildart and Healy (1994) discuss a need for proper skills training to prepare for the advances of employer expectations and demands on employees. They write about the findings of a statewide task force in Maine which investigated the skills necessary for success in the workplace of the 1990s. The report presents the findings based on input from employers and other influential groups throughout the state of Maine. Details of the report are as follows:

> Essential basic skills provide a foundation for all other skills, including academic and communication skills related to reading, writing, mathematics and computation, listening, and speaking; thinking skills related to reasoning, problem solving, decision making, and creative thinking; and personal qualities related to responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, ethics, flexibility, self-control, and a commitment to learn; interpersonal skills such as participating as a member of a team, teaching others new skills, serving others, exercising leadership, negotiating, and working with diversity; and selecting and applying technology. (p. 96)

Wills (1995) addressed the need for skill standards to be considered in the educational efforts of programs that provide job training to the unemployed and underemployed. The author cites examples of how the workforce has changed and summarizes various research findings and reports. A multitude of documents has sent out the message that the requirements of the workplace have changed, and the author recommends that the content of education and training programs has to adjust to the new requirements. She stresses that educational providers must substantially rethink how they allocate vocational preparation resources, design curricula, deliver instruction and provide training for the workplace of tomorrow.

G. Related Terminology

Folinsbee (1995) addressed the need for skill development as being essential for today's employees. Discussing the need for individuals to be able to deal with a complex, and evolving workplace, the author stated:

> As we move into the next millennium, there is a pressing need to enhance skills such as reading, writing, math, and oral communication to deal with changing workplace needs. Changing technology, increased employee decision making, quality initiatives, and new government regulations have made workplace education a priority. In the workplace, opportunities for basic skills development can provide the foundation for other learning. (p. 63)

Folinsbee (1995) also discusses a common theme in the terminology used to refer to work skills required to obtain and maintain employment. The author interchangeably uses the terms basic skills, workplace literacy and workplace education to essentially have the same meaning. She stresses that the necessary workplace skills can often be clouded in their meaning, and thus recommends the interchangeable usage. Referring to this confusion, the author noted:

> Much of the terminology used can be problematic not only in its assumptions and congruency or lack of congruency with a particular ideology, but also in how different interest groups perceive these terms. For example, the term *literacy* is problematic because of the stigma it carries. Employees are reluctant to be associated with programs that carry this label. In addition, decision makers from both business and labor may interpret literacy narrowly and fail to recognize important needs within their organizations. On the other hand, using the word *literacy* ensures that issue of adult basic education stays on the agenda of funders and policy makers. In addition, it carries a rich culture and

> history of experience that can contribute to the field of workplace education.
>
> The term *basic skills* can be confused with the term entry-level skills. It also may be limiting because it is associated with a set of discrete abilities that are isolated from the broader social and political context of the workplace.
>
> *Workplace education* is a more generic term coined by adult educators, and refers to learning that focuses on reading, writing, math, and oral communication. Although this expression seems more positive and inclusive, it can be confused with other kinds of training and education delivered in the workplace, and does not reflect changes to organizational policies and practices that may be needed. (p. 65)

The similarity of terms is further contained in the literature on adult education and job training programs. Participants enrolled in education and training designed to increase workplace skill development often were enrolled in classes referred to as literacy programs. Malicky and Norman (1993) studied adults enrolled in literacy programs and reported on perceptions about themselves and their lives. The authors found little evidence of research that focused on the lives of adult literacy learners or on their perceptions of changes in their lives as a result of their participation. They concluded that in their overview of research on adult illiteracy that the perceptions, views and attitudes of participants are virtually absent from the majority of the literature. The authors state that only a handful of researchers have conducted studies with adult learners enrolled in programs or what the impact of literacy education is on their lives.

Malicky and Norman (1993) conducted research with adults enrolled in literacy programs. In their study, participants were asked to indicate if there were any changes in how they felt about themselves. The enrollees' responses were categorized into three general areas: cognitive/academic, psychological/affective and social. In relation to academic effects, respondents indicated that they were able to communicate better and were more outspoken as a result of attending the program. The most frequent affective or psychological change mentioned by participants in this study was increased confidence. Other frequent responses in this category included statements regarding increased self-esteem, being more comfortable in situations, feeling proud, and just feeling good and productive because of what they were doing. Overall, the participants perceived positive changes within themselves, particularly in the initial stages of program participation. The authors summarized that there is a need to recognize the complexity of the lives of adult learners, as well as a need for more support services, and for more long-term research.

H. Job Readiness Training Through CCAC

Community colleges traditionally play a key role in job training of the unemployed. The unemployed and disadvantaged often rely on the availability and expertise of the community college to provide pertinent training. Therefore, there is a responsibility to insure that these individuals receive relevant instruction and have successful experiences that will lead to job placement.

There is a need to identify and examine the factors that comprise a successful job training program. This study will explore the perceptions and impressions of the participants who were enrolled in the training program. Community colleges have responded to the needs of various funding sources to provide education and training to eligible participants.

As evidenced in the preceding review of the literature, the workforce is in a period of change and transition. With the onset of technology, the impact of downsizing, the changing managerial styles, and the increasing expectations of employers' demands on employees, a different level of skills is now necessary to succeed in the job setting. The employer's "wish list" of employee skill levels has been identified in the various studies cited in the review of the literature. The need remains for additional research which will add to existing knowledge. The CCAC Job Readiness Training Program provides an opportunity to address the issue of employability training and the acquisition of skills necessary for today's job market.

From the review of the related literature, the following appears to be most relevant to this study. First, the profile of skills necessary for today's workforce and, second, the training components necessary beyond the basic skills to a set of expanded skills that provide adequate training to unemployed individuals. It is hoped the results of this study will be of value by adding to the understanding of the processes of acquiring the necessary employability skills.

The literature concerning the necessary job skills addresses seven groups of skills that employers sought from their new employees: reading, writing and computation skills; listening and speaking skills; learning how to learn skills' problem solving and creative thinking skills; personal management skills; teamwork skills; leadership skills and organizational effectiveness. These seven groups of skills were taken into consideration during the planning and designing stage of the Job Readiness Training Program. The curriculum design of the program addresses the implementation of these skill areas in the lesson plans, course objectives, and classroom activities of the participants' training and education. The classroom learning activities attempt to address the acquisition of the skill areas leading to the enhancement of a participant's employability.

Program participants are engaged in an active, experiential approach to learning in the classroom. Throughout the training program the importance of the skills that have been identified as necessary by today's employers are continually stressed and emphasized in all classroom learning activities. This study will focus on how the program's completers perceived the training and instruction they received while enrolled.

I. Summary

A composite grouping of all the workplace skills and competencies includes seven distinct categories, all of which have been identified by several different sources. These categories range from solid basic competencies to more advanced hierarchies of an individual's personal development and have been recognized as the kind of qualities employers expect from their employees.

1. Reading, writing, and computation, as identified by the U.S. Department of Labor (1992), Hudson Institute (1987), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), American Society for Training and Development (1983), and Carnevale et al. (1990), are deemed to be essential for a competent workforce.
2. Communication skills, as demonstrated by correct standard verbal usage, listening skills and interpretive competencies, were described by Levin and Rumberger (1989), Hudson Institute (1987), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), American Society for Training and Development (1983), Carnevale et al. (1990), and John (1994).
3. Learning-how-to-learn skills, including problem solving and creative thinking, are essential thinking skills according to Levin and Rumberger (1989), U.S. Department of Labor (1992), Hudson Institute (1987), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), American Society for Training and Development (1983), National Academy of

Sciences (1984), Carnevale et al. (1990), John (1994), and the National Alliance of Business (1995).

4. Personal management skills (self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting) have been cited by Levin and Rumberger (1989), U.S. Department of Labor (1992), Hudson Institute (1987), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), American Society for Training and Development (1983), National Academy of Sciences (1984), Carnevale et al. (1990), U.S. Department of Labor (1993), and John (1994).
5. Teamwork skills, as defined by Levin and Rumberger (1989), U.S. Department of Labor (1992), Hudson Institute (1987), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), American Society for Training and Development (1983), Carnevale et al. (1990), U.S. Department of Labor (1993), National Academy of Sciences (1984), John (1994), and National Alliance of Business (1995), are necessary for a competent workforce.
6. Leadership skills have been identified by American Society for Training and Development (1983), Carnevale et al. (1990), and National Academy of Sciences (1984).
7. Organizational effectiveness, as recognized by U.S. Department of Labor (1992), Virginia State Department of Education (1993), Carnevale et al. (1990), and National Academy of Sciences (1984), are essential workforce qualities.

These seven competency groups form a core set of outcomes from which all training must proceed. Together they reinforce each other and create a professional profile of attributes that are necessary to function successfully in an employment setting.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the topic of employability training and job readiness, as it related to adult students who participated in an instructional program. The study examined the development of a job readiness profile of employability skills necessary to enter or re-enter the job market. The study identified and analyzed perceptions of program completers as to their impressions of the instruction they received.

Participants who completed the program were asked about their current employability skill level and the benefit of training received while enrolled in the program. The assessment occurred through a questionnaire which was mailed to program completers. The questionnaire used closed- and open-ended questions to determine perceptions about the program's services and preparation for further education or job placement.

B. Setting

The study occurred at the Community College of Allegheny County (Pennsylvania), utilizing students who completed the "Job Readiness Training Program." This program offers classroom instruction in the areas of job readiness and employability skills. Participants enrolled in the program were sponsored by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and met the eligibility requirements of low-income, unemployed and disadvantaged status.

1. Job Readiness Training Program

The Job Readiness Training Program (JRTP) has been in operation since July, 1994. The overall objective of the program is for students to attain marketable job skills. The curriculum emphasizes the skills, qualities, attributes, and abilities necessary to succeed in the workplace. Participants attain job skills through a comprehensive instructional format and coordination of related activities.

The program operates under the administration of the Community College of Allegheny County, Boyce Campus Braddock Center. Funds for the program are allocated from the Allegheny County Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The JTPA is a federal program designed to provide training and assistance to the unemployed and economically disadvantaged.

Participants in the Job Readiness Training Program must meet eligibility requirements imposed by the federal government. Applicants are eligible for services upon meeting certain low-income and disadvantaged categories.

The program offers a "package of services" which include:

- Life Skills/Orientation to the World of Work
- Career Education/Exploration
- Pre-Employment/Work Maturity Competencies
- Job-Related Academic Preparation/Remediation
- Coordination of Work Experience/Internships
- Case Management and Counseling Services

Upon verification of eligibility, the applicant is referred to the program through the intake process. The verification process consists of documenting the residency and income status of each applicant. Students referred from the county JTPA offices are enrolled following an open-entry format which allows for greater flexibility regarding the student's initial entry into the program. Applicants are interviewed, assessed, evaluated, and accepted at an entry level that corresponds to each student's individual employment goals and abilities. The primary focus is directed towards the process of orientation to the world of work.

A unique feature of the training program is its ability to accept new students on an intake cycle of every two weeks. This open-entry enrollment allows new students to begin training without much of a waiting period. In addition, the program features a completion stage which enables students to exit at any time (open-exit) upon meeting prescribed educational goals and predetermined outcomes. Therefore, the length of enrollment varies with each student. Completion of the program is dependent on the student successfully achieving the training objectives that have been identified and is also based upon the start date of the participant's next training program.

New participants are accepted into the program every second Monday on an open-entry basis. The initial training step involves an extensive week-long orientation. During the orientation phase, students are assessed and provided with details relating to the structure of the program. Following orientation, students are then scheduled to begin classroom instruction.

Each student receives 20 hours of weekly classroom instruction. Topics of courses include academic basic skills, personal development, motivational training, computer literacy, keyboarding skills, and job related math, reading and English. Throughout the program, emphasis is continually placed on instruction that is job specific and related to the specific skill areas that employers demand from their workers.

Once initial objectives have been met for each individual student, the participant then completes the program and is referred to the funding source (JTPA) for their next phase of training. Program completers continue their education at other JTPA funded training programs or job-placement activities.

2. Community College of Allegheny County

The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is a comprehensive two-year college and offers educational programs to meet a wide range of needs. The academic programs lead to the Associate Degree in Arts, the Associate Degree in Science, the Associate Degree in Applied Sciences and the Certificate. In addition, an extensive variety of non-credit, special interest and community service programs are offered. These programs are offered at the College's four campuses, nine major off-campus centers, and at over 200 off-campus sites.

During its 29 year history, the College has adapted to meet the educational needs of its students. In the 1993-94 academic year, the College enrolled 105,506 students, with 30,058 in academic programs and 70,448 in community service and continuing education programs. In 1994, there were 2,388 graduates, bringing the grand total of graduates to 49,971 since its beginning in 1966 (CCAC Catalog, 1995-96 edition).

The Mission and Goals. The mission and goals of the Community College of Allegheny County are detailed in the Catalog (1995-96) as:

> The Community College is committed to providing an accessible and affordable college education, greater educational opportunity, comprehensive college programming and quality instruction in its classrooms. Its mission is to provide a high quality comprehensive community college program for the residents of Allegheny County. This program will include vocational-technical and career education, community services, developmental education, college transfer programs, as well as general education to enrich and enhance the student's life. The College will seek to carry out its program with the most innovative and effective educational methods available, as economically as possible, at the lowest possible cost to its students and with full accountability to its constituents. The College will maintain an open-door admissions policy and will conduct its programs at multiple locations convenient to its students. (p. 2)

Boyce Campus. The four campuses of the CCAC system are: Allegheny Campus, Boyce Campus, North Campus, and South Campus. The Job Readiness Training Program is part of the Boyce Campus operation and is situated in the community of Braddock.

Boyce Campus, located in Monroeville, began offering courses in 1966. The first three years of operation were situated in rented space at Gateway High School. The present facility was occupied in the fall of 1969.

In the fall of 1995, there were 3,702 students enrolled in day and evening credit courses. In addition, there were 2,805 students enrolled in continuing education courses (CCAC Facts and Figures, October 1995).

3. Boyce Campus Braddock Center

To meet the increasing need for classroom space and to provide for accessible education, the College established nine off-campus centers to serve the educational needs of specific regions and neighborhoods. The Boyce Campus Braddock Center is one of the nine system-wide centers and exists to make programs even more available and accessible.

Boyce Campus began operating the community-based Braddock Center in the fall of 1983. Since then, the Center has experienced extraordinary enrollment growth. For the greater part of its history, the Center has managed non-credit grant programs as well as entry-level training for clerical workers and nurse aides. These programs have been augmented by a variety of credit course offerings, community-based non-credit programming and beginning level core subjects within the college's associate degree programs.

The Center provides a wide variety of state and federally funded programs designed to provide education, academic preparation, and intensive job training to students who may otherwise lack the opportunity and resources to receive these services. The facility is designed to bolster the socioeconomic conditions of the area in cooperation with local, state and federal efforts. Program offerings provide an educational setting that conscientiously considers the strengths of educating students in a multicultural, multi-ethnic setting. The Job Readiness Training Program (the focus of this study) is housed at the Braddock Center and is a major grant funded operation of the off-campus facility.

C. Research Design

The population selected for this study consisted of program completers. The subjects were economically disadvantaged adult students who completed the "Job Readiness Training Program."

The descriptive survey method was utilized in this study as an appropriate data-gathering method to determine "what-is" (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 354). This descriptive method involves analysis, classification, quantification, and evaluation of information (McAshan, 1963).

Data for this descriptive study were obtained from a questionnaire which was sent to participants who completed the training program. For the purpose of this study, the survey technique was utilized to gather data about the participant's background, characteristics, perceptions about the program's services and preparation for further education or job placement. The questionnaire used closed- and open-ended questions.

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, it was necessary to systematically collect, analyze, report, and summarize data concerning the participants who completed the job readiness program. According to McKay (1971), most educational research aimed at obtaining information necessary for this type of analysis falls into one of two categories: research directed at discovering causal relationships and descriptive research.

Best (1970) indicated that:

> Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions of relations that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are being felt; trends that are developing. (p. 116)

Good (1963) suggested that the terminology and literature of the descriptive-survey studies include such terms as descriptive, survey, normative, status, and trend. Descriptive studies are concerned with current conditions or present facts pertaining to the nature of a group of people, a number of objects, or a class of events, and includes the procedures of analysis, induction, classification, measurement or enumeration. The collection of data regarding current conditions falls under the category of survey.

The community college program that was studied is in its second year of operation. Therefore, there was a need to investigate the effectiveness and to measure the value of the training. The descriptive method was utilized because no evaluative data currently exist and because the investigation was concerned with the current conditions or present facts.

A descriptive survey was the most suitable research tool for gathering the necessary data to investigate this topic.

Descriptive research is concerned with depicting the present. Good (1963) wrote that a descriptive survey is used when an investigator intends to secure evidence concerning the existing situation of current conditions, to identify standards with which to compare present conditions in order to plan the next step, and to determine how to take the next step. Van Dalen (1962) indicated that descriptive researchers ask important initial questions such as what exists and what is the present status of these phenomena. The objective is to determine the nature of prevailing conditions, practices, attitudes and to seek accurate descriptions of activities and processes. They depict current status and identify relationships that exist among phenomena, as well as trends that appear to be developing. Researchers can also use this approach to make predictions about future events. Good (1963) and Van Dalen (1962) concurred that when conducting this type of study, it is important that the researchers seek more than just bare description; they are not mere tabulators. Competent investigators collect evidence on the basis of some hypothesis or theory, carefully tabulate and summarize the data, and then thoroughly analyze it in an endeavor to draw meaningful generalizations to advance knowledge.

A common method to conduct a descriptive survey study is the questionnaire. Johnson (1977) suggested that of the various methods of data collection that can be used in a descriptive survey study, the most common are the interview and the questionnaire.

Survey techniques were utilized to gather data about the students. The use of a questionnaire was the most efficient method of gathering data from participants who completed the program. Fowler (1988) acknowledges that possible problems exist with the use of mail surveys. However, "if the researcher is persistent and if the study is well-conceived and well-designed, acceptable response rates can be obtained by mail" (p. 55).

For this study, a cover letter (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) accompanied the questionnaire (Appendix C). The letter detailed the significance of the study, the participant selection process, and the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity. A postage paid envelope was enclosed.

To assist in securing an acceptable response rate, follow-up procedures were initiated to encourage the subjects to complete and return the questionnaire. A follow-up letter was mailed and telephone calls were made to reinforce the importance of the study.

The survey method was appropriate because the sample was clearly defined (program completers) and the objective was to describe the conditions of the population sample.

D. Population

Considerable research has been undertaken and reported in the literature on employability training. These studies have produced evidence about what today's employers are expecting of employees. To better prepare employees for today's workforce, a job readiness training program was developed by a local community college center. This study investigated participants' reactions to the program and assessed the perception of skills learned while enrolled in the program.

The population selected for this study consisted of all students who completed the training program under investigation and, therefore, the utilization of a questionnaire was the most effective means of collecting data.

The survey technique, through the use of a questionnaire, was utilized to gather data about the participants' background, characteristics, age, race, gender, educational attainment, and work history. More specifically, the participants' perceptions, opinions, and comments about the program's services and operation were analyzed.

The subjects were mailed the questionnaire and asked to complete and return the instrument. A cover letter explained the questionnaire and provided instructions on the completion and return procedures. A postage paid envelope was enclosed.

The population consisted of all 150 adult students who completed the Community College of Allegheny County's Job Readiness Training Program. During the time frame that the population for this study was derived, the program enrolled a total of 188 participants. Out of the 188 total enrollments in the program, the population which was comprised of 150 completers was gathered. Therefore, the program's completion rate was 79.8%. The program is funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Participants met eligibility requirements of the JTPA funding source. Eligibility of the subjects was limited to low income, and unemployed residents of Allegheny County.

The selection of subjects was based upon the criteria that they (a) completed the training program during 1994-1996; (b) were mailed a questionnaire using closed- and open-ended questions; and (c) completed the questionnaire and returned it. The questionnaire was mailed to 150 subjects who completed the program.

E. The Questionnaire

The collection of data was obtained from a questionnaire designed to secure information relating to participant's perceptions of employability skills learned in a job readiness training program. The instrument included both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire entitled Job Readiness Training Program Survey (Appendix C) was developed to gather responses directly linked to the statement of the problem and the research questions. Consideration was also given to the subject areas taught in the training program as well as the findings within the review of the literature.

The literature review relative to workplace skills and competencies revealed a composite grouping of seven essential skills recognized as the kind of qualities employers expect from their employees. The skills identified play important roles in an employment setting and were extremely important to the development of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of 37 items. Part I was designed to secure demographic data about the program completers. Questionnaire items 1-10 requested data by which respondents could be classified and described. The background characteristics of program completers according to age, gender, race, marital status, number of dependents, source of income and work experience were requested.

As the questionnaire was developed, each research question was taken into consideration and analyzed as described below.

1. Research Question 1

What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:

a. Usefulness of the instruction and training they received while enrolled in the program?

Part II of the questionnaire and specifically Question 17 addressed the opinions and attitudes about the usefulness of the training program.

b. Skills acquired by participating in the program, including helpfulness in preparing for continuing education or job search activities?

Questionnaire items 16 and 18 through 34 pertained to skills learned in the program. These items allowed the respondents to describe their perceptions of skills acquired while enrolled in the program.

In addition, the literature review concerning the necessary job skills emphasized seven groups of skills that employers sought from their new employees: reading, writing, and computation skills; communication skills; learning how-to-learn skills (including problem solving and creative thinking); personal management skills (self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting); teamwork skills; leadership skills; and organizational effectiveness. These seven groups of skills were taken into consideration and included in the content of the questionnaire. Specifically, items 23 through 32 pertained to the skills that were identified and listed in the literature review.

c. Benefits that they received by attending and completing the program?

Questionnaire items 35 and 36 allowed for describing the benefits of the program. Items 36 allowed for an open-ended explanation to further answer the overall benefit gained from the program.

2. Research Question 2

What recommendations do the program completers have concerning the type of instruction and training the program offers?

Item 37 asked for comments, recommendations or suggestions about the type of training the program offers. Space was provided for the respondent to explain and to further elaborate with recommendations.

3. Research Question 3

Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?

Items 8 and 9 in Part I of the questionnaire pertained to the current status of the program completers. The responses to items 8 and 9 were closely analyzed to determine if there were any differences in the perception of completers based on their present situation.

F. Pilot Study

This study utilized a pilot study to assist in establishing validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire. The use of a pilot study was used to help determine the feasibility and appropriateness of the items. Fowler (1988) contends that "in surveys, answers are of interest not intrinsically but because of their relationship to something they are supposed to measure" (p. 74). Questions provide reliability by providing consistent measures in similar circumstances, and validity is established when answers correspond to what they are designed to measure. Babbie (1979) reported that good questionnaires maximize the relationship between what the researcher is attempting to measure and the recorded responses.

A pilot study was conducted by administering the questionnaire to four former students previously enrolled in the program. These former students served as a means of providing additional validation related to the content and construction of the instrument. They were requested to complete the survey and to comment on any concerns they had about the questions. The pilot test was designed not to gather data but rather to determine whether any problems existed in the style in which the questions were posed. Responses from these four people were not included in the final analysis.

The purpose of conducting the pilot study was twofold:

1. to acquire information from the group regarding the clarity and conciseness of the questions, and
2. to determine an approximated time-frame for the self-administration of the questionnaire.

Following completion of the questionnaire, discussion occurred in relationship to the design of the instrument. All four respondents indicated that the questions were clear and readily understood and all directions were followed. None of the pilot respondents suggested changes in the survey instrument. An open discussion occurred to offer comments about the content and format of the questionnaire. The results of this pilot test indicated that for this sample, the questionnaire presented no difficulties. The amount of time needed to complete the survey was recorded in order to advise the research population of an expected amount of time required to answer the questionnaire.

The major objective of the pilot test was to have a representative sample of individuals, who did not participate in the actual study, respond to the questions. The pilot test provided assistance to determine if the answers were useful in identifying information relating to the questionnaire. The group consisted of four former students who are now serving in work-study positions at the Community College.

An overview of the study's purpose was given to the pilot study group and participants were asked to answer the questions honestly and completely. Participants were encouraged to circle any questions that were vague, ambiguous, or unclear. After the questionnaire was completed, discussion ensued as to the wording, meaning, and intent of the instrument.

As the pilot study group completed the questionnaire, the response time and completion times were documented by the researcher. Discussion of the survey ensued and participants were asked to make suggestions, offer recommendations, and to provide feedback of their impressions. The discussion centered on the degree to which the questionnaire items accurately described the students' impressions of the program. General consensus of impressions led to a review of how the questions were viewed as understandable and inclusive.

Based on the participants' feedback and recommendations, the questionnaire was further analyzed for any possible modifications, refinements and additions to the original design. Pilot questionnaires were carefully analyzed for any variations between answers provided by respondents, clarity of instructions, flow, structure of questions, and overall organization of the questionnaire. In addition, the pilot study and discussion assisted in acquiring information regarding the clarity, conciseness of the questions and to acquire an approximated time for the self-administration of the actual instrument.

G. Focus Group

The final design of the questionnaire instrument utilized for this study took into consideration the use of a focus group. Rea and Parker (1992) asserted that before the survey instrument is developed, the researcher should consult with individuals familiar with the project under investigation. It is important to gain insight and ideas from individuals having knowledge and understanding of the research topic. The use of a focus group provides assistance in creating the establishment of an information base. This base level of information may render guidance in the design of a questionnaire for the formal survey process. Feedback and discussion can lead to a more focused and well-directed study. They stated:

> Prior to the development of a survey instrument (questionnaire), it is necessary to gather information about the subject matter under investigation from interested parties and key individuals. Such individuals might be brought together in an informational group setting where relevant issues and problems can be freely discussed and debated. The goals and objectives of the research can be clearly defined and the practical relevance of the proposed survey can be explained. (Rea & Parker, 1992, p. 14)

For the purpose of this study a focus group was assembled for supporting the final design of the questionnaire. The focus group consisted of various staff members associated with the program investigated. Feedback and discussion determined the effectiveness of devising the actual questionnaire which was mailed to the program completers.

Rea and Parker (1992) recommended that during the initial stages of the survey research, the principal investigator should create a team of experts who jointly plan and implement the design of the questionnaire. They reported:

> Foremost among these preliminary information-gathering techniques is the focus group. The focus group is a structured set of meetings in which individuals who are deemed to have some knowledge of the issues associated with the research study are brought together in roundtable discussions run by a group leader. The discussion that ensues should contribute significantly to an understanding of the key substantive issues necessary for the development of the questionnaire. (p. 34)

The focus group for this study consisted of various instructors, counselors, and support specialists associated with the job readiness program. The five members of the focus group possessed expertise and understanding of the day to day operations of the program. The advice, recommendations, insights and perspectives of the group were taken into consideration as the questionnaire was refined and finalized. Another benefit of the collaboration was a greater degree of confidence in the validity of the questionnaire (i.e., that it actually measured what it was intended to measure).

H. Questionnaire Implementation

A mailing list of the names of program completers was assembled and individuals were assigned a four digit code, beginning with 0001 through 0150. A list of names and codes was created in order to monitor and date questionnaires as they were received in return mail. The list was also used to identify non-respondents for a second mailing and follow-up activities to increase the response rate of returns.

A packet of documents was prepared for each program completer. The packet consisted of a cover letter on CCAC stationery (Appendix A), a consent form (Appendix B), the coded questionnaire (Appendix C), and a business reply postage paid envelope for return of the instrument and the consent form.

I. Procedures

The questionnaires were prepared and mailed to the former students of the program. After a period of 21 days, follow-up procedures were then initiated for the non-respondents. The follow-up procedures consisted of the following steps:

1. A letter (see Appendix D) designed to remind the former participants of the importance of the study and a request to please complete and return the questionnaire. Also, the letter indicated that if the original mailing was misplaced or not received to then call for a replacement.
2. After a period of 14 days, telephone calls were made as a reminder and another request to please complete and return the questionnaire.

3. Following a ten day period of time, a final mailing occurred to all of the non-respondents. The mailing consisted of a different cover letter further explaining the study (see Appendix E), another statement of consent and the questionnaire. These procedures resulted in an improvement in the overall response rate.

A data base listing of a collection of 150 names and addresses was used for the initial step of the data collection phase. Of the population of 150, 85 questionnaires were completed for a response rate of 56.7%.

The 85 completed questionnaires were obtained in the following fashion:

1. Forty-two subjects were contacted in person through the researcher visiting their current school. The questionnaires were completed in a self-administered fashion with the researcher merely transmitting the document in person.
2. Eight subjects completed their questionnaires on the last day of their training before they went on to their next phase of training.
3. One hundred questionnaires were mailed to the residence of the former participants.
4. Thirty-five questionnaires were returned.

Rea and Parker (1992) indicate that a 50-60% survey return rate is considered satisfactory for the purposes of analysis and reporting findings. Thus, the 56.7% response rate of this survey is consistent with their findings.

J. Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study, descriptive research was employed in order to obtain appropriate information. The survey method was utilized to gather data. The rationale for using the survey method is discussed by Oppenheim (1966). He asserts:

> A survey is a form of planned collection of data for the purpose of description or prediction as a guide to action or for the purpose of analyzing the relationships between certain variables. (p. 1)

In addition, Borg and Gall (1979) add to Oppenheim's (1966) statement by explaining:

> Survey research typically employs questionnaires and interviews in order to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher. (p. 27)

The information obtained from the questionnaires was tabulated according to the 37 items listed on the instrument. All questionnaire items were separated and tallied. The data were analyzed by the percentage of responses to each questionnaire item. The results of the survey were analyzed according to the sections in which they were organized. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were tabulated to determine significant associations and mean scores were calculated to assess the identified variables. In addition, a t-test was utilized to explore the differences in the status (employment and school enrollment) of the program completers.

The data analysis depended upon several factors and the initial phase involved the translation of the responses into a form which could then be analyzed. This involved quantification by assigning numbers to the responses. Items on the questionnaire that were open-ended required a category system for translation. Such systems were based on a thorough content analysis of responses or on a priority basis. Considerable counting and categorization were involved in the assembling and coding of the data.

Respondents to the survey were asked to rate their answers to the individual questions through a self-scoring procedure. Responses were then grouped in order to analyze the information collected in a more meaningful way. Whenever possible, numerical scores were assigned to items in each category.

Upon return of the survey forms, the data were organized, coded and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Percentages, means, and frequency counts were used to present information related to each of the elements of the problem. Tables were constructed to present detailed information related to the findings.

The questionnaire developed for this study utilized a Likert scale for the respondent to select possible responses. According to Rea and Parker (1992) some questions are constructed using a scaled response mechanism in which a continuum of response alternatives is offered for consideration. A Likert scale entails a rating scale in which the attitude of the respondent can be measured on a continuum such as highly favorable to highly unfavorable, or vice versa.

The data analysis included the calculation of the mean, or arithmetic average. The use of the Likert scale, which generally associates numerical values with ordinal data, permits the calculation of an arithmetic mean. As the data were analyzed, consideration was given to the frequency of responses. The frequencies were calculated and compared to the rating scale categories used in the questionnaire. Responses on items that were of higher value were compared to responses that were of lower value for possible further interpretation of perceptions and attitudes.

According to Tuckman (1988), choosing a statistical test is an important consideration for proper data analysis. A t-test is a technique for carrying out parametric statistical tests and should be used if there are only two conditions or levels. Tuckman (1988) states:

> A t-test is a statistical test that allows you the comparison of two means to determine the probability that the difference between the means is a real difference rather than a chance difference. (p. 271)

As the data were analyzed for this study, the t-test provided a technique to compare the means of two groups to see if there was a significant difference. Questionnaire items 8 and 9 pertain to the current status of program completers. Differences in the perceptions of the respondents employed vs. unemployed and enrolled in school vs. not enrolled in school were analyzed.

Items on the questionnaire that are open-ended, such as question 37, were analyzed by content analysis. The categories of responses were closely examined to determine if there were any common themes or patterns that existed. Further consideration was given to the content analysis of all appropriate questionnaire items and are fully explained in the Results and Discussion sections of this study.

K. Tabulation of Data

Upon completion of the data collection phase of this study, the results of the survey were transferred to standard computer forms provided by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Measurement and Evaluation. The office tabulated the results utilizing survey software by frequency, percentages of response, mean scores and t-test. The results are presented in Chapter IV of this document in table form.

L. Qualitative Analysis

To assist in the analysis of the open-ended questions, a computer software package entitled Ethnograph was utilized. The Ethnograph software is a research tool which enables the investigator to more easily code and categorize responses. It is not a statistical piece of software, but is more of an organizer which allows common themes to emerge. The qualitative data were analyzed using this tool to provide a thematic structure of the open-ended responses. This led to an enhanced sense of meaning and an expanded interpretation of the data.

The open-ended questions allowed the respondent to expand upon their answers. The open-ended question allows the completer to expand a response in a variety of possible ways.

This array of possibilities resulted in a wide and varied total number of responses per question. The data were tabulated by frequency, percentages and theme areas. The frequency and percentages were calculated by determining the number of responses related to the identified themes and were reported in tables reflecting the various categories. Representative direct statements were also selected to illustrate specific themes. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in Chapter IV of this document as well as in Appendix I.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

A. Introduction

The findings in this study are derived from information provided by a group of 85 individuals formerly enrolled in the Job Readiness Training Program located in Braddock, Pennsylvania. The respondents completed the program between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1996.

Four broad types of data were collected. The first was general information about the characteristics of the students in terms of age, sex, race, marital status, number of dependents, and prior employment. The second was information regarding the students' reasons for seeking training. The third area of information collected dealt with the subjects' present status of employment, school enrollment and the receipt of welfare benefits. The fourth area focused on impressions and perceptions of training and services offered by the program.

B. Description of the Population

The total population for this study consisted of 150 individuals who had been enrolled as students in the Job Readiness Program, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The participants in the program must meet certain eligibility requirements, specifically, meeting certain low-income guidelines, being unemployed, adhering to residency requirements within Allegheny County, and meeting guidelines with respect to various disadvantaged classifications. The overall objective of the training is successful job placement.

The 150 former students of the training program served as the population for this study. The average age of the total population is 31.28, with a range of 19-59. The gender classification consisted of 83% female and 17% male. The racial characteristics consist of 63% Black, 33% White, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% other (multiracial). The marital status of the total population is comprised of 74% single, 16% married, 9% divorced and 1% widowed.

These participants were initially enrolled in the program to increase their employability skills and to offset their identified disadvantages. While enrolled in the program, the participants were in a period of transition. Their goal was to enter or re-enter the job market with a plan for future employment. Traditionally, participants have been relying upon the Department of Public Assistance or were receiving unemployment compensation from the State Department of Labor. The program is designed to prepare the participants for their next step of training. The readiness program has been identified as a part of their overall individual educational development plan which will lead to further training and then job placement. Their average length of enrollment in the program was approximately 12 weeks.

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze perceptions of program completers as related to the topic of employability training and job readiness skills. Participants who completed the training program during the time frame of July 1, 1994 through June 30, 1996 were surveyed to determine perceptions about their experience. The population consisted of 150 program completers. Of the 150 participants surveyed, 85 (56.7%) responded. Findings of the perceptions of the respondents were obtained by analyzing the responses to the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix C. This chapter is organized according to the three research questions.

C. Profile of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in this section. Tables 1-5 represent the age, gender, race, marital status and the number of dependent children of the respondents.

The average age of the respondents is 31.06, with a range of 20-54. The average age of the total population is 31.28 with a range of 19-59. The gender classification consists of 92% female and 8% male. The racial characteristics of the respondents consist of 58.8% Black, 35.3% White, 2.4% Asian/ Pacific Islander, and 3.5% other (multiracial). The marital status of the respondents is comprised of 64.7% single, 16.5% married, 16.5% divorced and 2.4% widowed.

As indicated previously, the total population consisted of 150 former participants of the program. Of the population of 150, 85 subjects responded. For comparison purposes demographic characteristics of the 65 non-respondents is also presented. The gender classification of the non-respondents consists of 72% female and 28% male. The racial characteristics consist of 69.2% black and 30.8% White. The marital status is comprised of 84.6% single and 15.4% married.

Table 6 reports on the employment experience of the participants prior to enrollment in the program. Before entering the program, 72.9% of the respondents reported a work history compared to 27.1% with no previous employment.

D. Reasons for Enrollment

Participants were asked to select reasons behind their decision to enter training and were able to give multiple responses. As shown in Table 7, 68.2% of the students enrolled to continue education and 61.2% chose to learn new skills. Other major reasons included 55.3% to seek employment, followed by 45.9% to become self sufficient.

Space was provided for respondents to explain other reasons for enrollment. This resulted in a response rate of 8.2% and included: to meet other people, to show the youth how important education is, to brush up on English and math, to stay active to keep child care benefits, to become better qualified for a job, to better motivate my self-esteem, and a way to get out of the construction field.

The program completers were asked to report on their current employment status. Most of the respondents (41.2%) were unemployed and seeking work. The remainder were unemployed but not seeking work (22.4%), employed part-time (18.8%), and employed full-time (17.6%) (see Table 8).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age	Number	Percent
20	4	4.8
21	5	6.0
22	3	3.6
23	5	6.0
24	5	6.0
25	2	2.4
26	5	6.0
27	2	2.4
28	8	9.5
29	2	2.4
30	4	4.8
31	7	8.3
32	1	1.2
33	3	3.6
34	2	2.4
35	2	2.4
36	5	6.0
37	1	1.2
38	2	2.4
39	2	2.4
42	3	3.6
43	1	1.2
44	5	6.0
45	2	2.4
46	1	1.2
51	1	1.2
54	1	1.2
	1	Missing
Total	85	100.0

N = 85, Mean = 31.06, Median = 30.0

Total Population Mean = 31.28 Non-respondents Mean = 31.57

Table 2

Respondents by Gender

Sex	Respondents Number	Respondents Percent	Non-respondents Number	Non-respondents Percent
Female	78	91.8	47	72.3
Male	7	8.2	18	27.7
Total	85	100.0	65	100.0

Table 3

Race of Respondents

Race	Respondents Number	Respondents Percent	Non-respondents Number	Non-respondents Percent
Black	50	58.8	45	69.2
White	30	35.3	20	30.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	2.4	0	0
Other (multiracial)	3	3.5	0	0
Total	85	100.0	65	100.0

Table 4

Marital Status of Respondents

	Respondents		Non-respondents	
Marital status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single	55	64.7	55	84.6
Married	14	16.5	10	15.4
Divorced	14	16.5	0	0
Widowed	2	2.4	0	0
Total	85	100.0	65	100.0

Table 5

Dependent Children Living at Home

Number of children	Number	Percent
0	14	16.5
1	30	35.3
2	16	18.8
3	16	18.8
4	9	10.6
Total	85	100.0

Table 6

Employment Experience Before Entering Program

Previous employment	Number	Percent
Yes	62	72.9
No	23	27.1
Total	85	100.0

Table 7

Reasons for Enrolling in the Program (Multiple Responses)

Reasons	Number	Percent
To continue education	58	68.2
To learn new skills	52	61.2
To seek employment	47	55.3
To become self sufficient	39	45.9
Recommendation of friend/family	15	17.6
Required to enroll	12	14.3
Referred from agency	8	9.5
Other reason	7	8.2

Table 8

Employment Status of Respondents

Status	Number	Percent
Employed part-time	16	18.8
Employed full-time	15	17.6
Unemployed seeking work	35	41.2
Unemployed not seeking work	19	22.4
Total	85	100.0

Table 9 reflects the school enrollment status with 50 (58.8%) respondents presently attending a school or other training program. In Table 10, 60 former students (70.6%) reported receiving benefits from public assistance.

Table 9

School Enrollment Status of Respondents

Status	Number	Percent
Yes	50	58.8
No	35	41.2
Total	85	100.0

Table 10

Responses According to Public Assistance Status

Status	Number	Percent
Yes	60	70.6
No	25	29.4
Total	85	100.0

E. Research Questions

Findings related to the three research questions are presented in this section.

1. Research Question 1

What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:

a. Usefulness of the instruction and training they received while in the program?

b. Skills acquired by participating in the program, including helpfulness in preparing for continuing education or job search activities? (In the areas of: (1) reading, writing, and computation, (2) communication skills, (3) learning-to-learn skills, including problem solving and creative thinking, (4) self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting, (5) teamwork skills, (6) leadership skills, and (7) organizational effectiveness.)

c. Benefits that they received by attending and completing the program?

a. Usefulness of the Instruction and Training - Former students were asked about how much they learned while in the program. The majority (41.2%) indicated "a great deal," 28.2% selected "quite a bit," and 24.7% chose "a fair amount" (Table 11).

Table 11

Responses to Question 11, "How much did you feel you learned in the program?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	35	24	21	5	0	4.05
%	41.2	28.2	24.7	5.9	0.0	

In reference to the interest level of students while enrolled in the program, 40 (47.1%) of the respondents chose the most positive rate of "very much," whereas only 1 (1.2%) of the former enrollees selected the least positive rate of "not at all" (Table 12).

Table 13 displays reactions to the way classes were taught. The most positive category of "very much" was chosen by 34 of the respondents, while the least positive category of "not at all" was not chosen by a single respondent.

Table 12

Responses to Question 12, "Did you find the time spent in the program to be interesting?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	40	28	13	3	1	4.21
%	47.1	32.9	15.3	3.5	1.2	

Table 13

Responses to Question 13, "Did you like the way classes were taught?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	34	22	25	4	1	4.01
%	40	25.9	29.4	4.7	0.0	

Participants responded to their description of the quality of training in Table 14 utilizing a 5-point rating scale: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = fair, 2 = satisfactory, and 1 = poor. The highest level of response was in the "excellent" category selected by 39 (45.9%) of the respondents. "Good" was chosen by 31 (36.5%), followed by "satisfactory" with 10 (11.5%) responses, 4 (4.7%) chose "fair," and 1 (1.2%) chose "poor."

Table 14

Responses to Question 14, "Overall, how do you best describe the quality of the training you received?"

	Most positive	(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	39	31	10	4	1	4.21
%	45.9	36.5	11.8	4.7	1.2	

Program completers were asked to choose, on a 5-point scale, how they viewed the help provided by the instructors. A majority of respondents, 71 (83.5%) indicated "always," 13 (15.3%) chose "usually," 1 (1.2%) chose "sometimes" and there were zero choices to the "rarely" and "never" categories (Table 15).

Table 15

Responses to Question 15, "Did the instructors give you help when you needed it?"

	Most positive	(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	71	13	1	0	0	4.82
%	83.5	15.3	1.2	0.0	0.0	

Students were asked to indicate whether they felt the program was of help in gaining new skills. Most respondents

(45.9% "very much" and 22.4% "quite a bit") felt their education was helpful (Table 16).

Table 16

Responses to Question 16, "Was the program of help to you in gaining new skills?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	39	19	21	5	1	4.06
%	45.9	22.4	24.7	5.9	1.2	

Program participants were asked to respond to how useful the instruction and training was that they received. The most frequently cited response (42.4%) was the highest rated choice of "very much." The next most cited category was "quite a bit," chosen by 29.5% of the respondents. Table 17 shows the complete breakdown of responses.

Table 17

Responses to Question 17, "How useful was the instruction and training you received?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	36	25	19	4	1	4.07
%	42.4	29.4	22.4	4.7	1.2	

b. Skills Acquired by Participating in the Program - Program completers were asked to use the forced-choice Likert scale to indicate the extent of skills that were improved through classroom instruction. The 5-point rating scale consisted of: 5 = very much, 4 = quite a bit, 3 = a fair amount, 2 = not much and 1 = not at all. The next five tables (Tables 18-22) represent the subject matter and content areas of instruction. The instructional areas consisted of classes in math (Table 18), reading (Table 19), English (Table 20), personal development (Table 21) and motivation (Table 22). In all five tables, the majority of choices were found in the most positive response category of "very much."

Table 18

Responses to Question 18, "Was the math class of help to you in improving skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	53	17	12	2	0	4.44
%	63.1	20.2	14.3	2.4	0.0	

Table 19

Responses to Question 19 "Was the reading class of help to you in improving skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	47	19	12	5	1	4.26
%	56.0	22.6	14.3	6.0	1.2	

Table 20

Responses to Question 20, "Was the English class of help to you in improving skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	43	24	9	7	1	4.20
%	51.2	28.6	10.7	8.3	1.2	

Table 21

Responses to Question 21, "Was the personal development class of help to you in improving skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	48	19	13	3	2	4.27
%	56.5	22.4	15.3	3.5	2.4	

Table 22

Responses to Question 22, "Was the motivational class of help to you in improving skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	55	17	10	2	1	4.45
%	64.7	20.0	11.8	2.4	1.2	

Subjects were questioned about their extent of improvement in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math. Tables 23, 24 and 25 describe how the completers responded to improvement in these areas. In reference to the improvement of reading skills, 28 (33.7%) of the respondents indicated the most often selected category of "very much." In relation to writing skills, most respondents, 30 (36.1%), chose "quite a bit." The question about math skills elicited the most responses, 36 (43.9%), in the most positive category of "very much" (see Tables 23, 24 and 25).

Table 23

Responses to Question 23, "To what extent did your reading skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	28	24	19	9	3	3.78
%	33.7	28.9	22.9	10.8	3.6	

Table 24

Responses to Question 24, "To what extent did your writing skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive		
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	17	30	23	10	3	3.58
%	20.5	36.1	27.7	12.0	3.6	

Table 25

Responses to Question 25, "To what extent did your math skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive		
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	36	19	18	8	1	3.99
%	43.9	23.2	22.0	9.8	1.2	

Table 26 shows perceptions of improvement in communication skills selected by 33 (40.2%) of the respondents in the most positive choice of "very much." The next most chosen area by 28 (34.1%) was "quite a bit."

Table 27 reflects impressions of respondents in their improvement of learning skills (learning how to learn, problem solving and creativity) in the categories of "very much" = 25 (30.5%), "quite a bit" = 28 (34.1%), "a fair amount" = 16 (19.5%), "not much" = 10 (12.2%), and "not at all" = 3 (3.7%).

Table 26

Responses to Question 26, "To what extent did your communication skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	33	28	15	5	1	4.06
%	40.2	34.1	18.3	6.1	1.2	

Table 27

Responses to Question 27, "To what extent did your learning skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	25	28	16	10	3	3.76
%	30.5	34.1	19.5	12.2	3.7	

Self-esteem was the theme of Table 28 and the survey asked for an indication of the extent of improvement. In relationship to this area, 39 (46.4%) chose the highest category of "very much," followed by a choice of "quite a bit" by 22 (26.2%). In addition, 14 (16.7%) respondents chose "a fair amount" and the category chosen the least often by 4 (4.8%) was "not at all."

Table 28

Responses to Question 28, "To what extent did your self-esteem improve?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	39	22	14	5	4	4.04
%	46.4	26.2	16.7	6.0	4.8	

Survey respondents were questioned about improvements in their motivation levels. The most often chosen response by 43 (51.8%) of the respondents was "very much". The next ranked response by frequency was "quite a bit" which was chosen by 21 (25.3%) of the former students (Table 29).

Table 29

Responses to Question 29, "To what extent did your motivation level improve?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	43	21	14	4	1	4.22
%	51.8	25.3	16.9	4.8	1.2	

Table 30 reports on the findings to the question about the level of improvement in teamwork skills. "Very much" was the most often chosen response 31 (37.3%). The least often chosen response was the category of "not at all," indicated by 3 (3.6%) of the former students.

Table 30

Responses to Question 30, "To what extent did your teamwork skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive		
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	31	25	12	12	3	3.83
%	37.3	30.1	14.5	14.5	3.6	

Former students were questioned about levels of improvement in the area of leadership skills. The most often selected choice was "a fair amount" by 26 (31.3%) of the respondents. The least often chosen response was "not at all" by 6 (7.2%) of those completing the survey (Table 31).

Table 31

Responses to Question 31, "To what extent did your leadership skills improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive		
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	18	23	26	10	6	3.45
%	21.7	27.7	31.3	12.0	7.2	

With regard to improvements in their effectiveness, the most often cited response was "quite a bit" by 32.5% of the former students. The same response rate of 21.5% was indicated in both the "very much" category as well as the category of "a fair amount" (Table 32).

Table 32

Responses to Question 32, "To what extent did your effectiveness improve?"

Most positive		(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	21	27	21	10	4	3.61
%	25.3	32.5	25.3	12.0	4.8	

Subjects were asked to indicate how much the program helped to prepare for the further continuation of their education. Approximately one-half (49.5%) selected "very much" and almost one-quarter (24.7%) chose "quite a bit." The least chosen response by 2 (2.4%) respondents was the category of "not at all" (Table 33).

Table 33

Responses to Question 33, "How much did the program help to prepare you for continuing your education?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	42	21	17	3	2	4.15
%	49.4	24.7	20.0	3.5	2.4	

When asked "How much did the program help to prepare you for job search activities?" 40% reported "very much." Twenty-one (24.7%) reported "quite a bit," followed by 14 (16.5%) who selected "a fair amount" (Table 34).

Table 34

Responses to Question 34, "How much did the program help to prepare you for job search activities?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	34	21	14	11	5	3.80
%	40.0	24.7	16.5	12.9	5.9	

c. Benefits Program Completers Received - The survey asked respondents to describe the overall benefit of the program in acquiring new skills. Table 35 details the responses and shows that a majority, 47 (55.3%), chose the most positive category of "very much," followed by 17 (20.0%) selecting the next highest of "quite a bit."

Table 35

Responses to Question 35, "Overall, how would you best describe the benefit of the program in acquiring new skills?"

Most positive		(Scale)			Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	47	17	14	5	2	4.20
%	55.3	20.0	16.5	5.9	2.4	

Completers were asked to choose on an overall basis how much they benefited from the program. The 5-point scale describing the benefit and the response rate consisted of: 5 = very much/48 (57.1%), 4 = quite a bit/21 (25.0%), 3 = a fair amount/11 (13.1%), 2 = not much/4 (4.8%) and 1 = not at all/0 (0%). In addition, the survey asked respondents to explain their answers to this question in the space that was provided (Table 36).

Table 36

Responses to Question 36, "Overall, how much did you benefit from the program?"

Most positive			(Scale)		Least positive	
Choice	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
N	48	21	11	4	0	4.34
%	57.1	25.0	13.1	4.8	0	

d. Written Comments Describing Benefits - In an open-ended question format, the completers were asked to explain their answer as to how much they benefited from the program. Of the 85 surveys, 40 included a response. These responses were grouped thematically into eight categories and are labeled and described below (Table 37). Direct quotes from several of these respondents are included when these served to especially reinforce a point made by a number of the respondents. A complete listing of the comments is included in Appendix G.

Table 37

Benefits of the Job Readiness Program Cited by Participants

Area of benefit	Sample statements
Increase in self-esteem and motivation	The program helped me with my motivation skills and helped in my going on to college by encouraging me.
	This program showed me that I can be anything that I want if you really set your heart into doing it.
	It made me more determined to finish and find employment.
Did not benefit from program	Not enough time was spent on my problem area of math. I was misled about the program and forced to sit in on classes that I did not need.
	I felt I benefited only because I am a go-getter and very serious about my financial stability. I stayed focused despite one instructor treating us adults as children.
Skill preparation for the workplace	The education I received in the program will help me find better employment.
	The program helped me do math better and for that I am very grateful.
	I now have all the skills I need rolled into one to make me a better person and to become employed.

(table continues)

Area of benefit	Sample statements
Setting and accomplishing goals	The biggest asset I received was goal setting. Now I set goals and stick to it.
	I never lost focus on getting into the MOST program. I met with resistance anything outside the focus.
Working with others	Socialization has always been a problem for me and being in this program prepared me for working with others.
	I learned a lot about other people and their needs.
Becoming organized and responsible	The program prepared me for continuing my education and getting me used to the pressures of deadlines in school.
	It helped me with my study skills.
	The teachers showed me how to become self sufficient in everyday life.
Job searching skills	I feel that I have learned some invaluable information about job searching, resume and cover letter writing.
	I learned how to dress properly for an interview.
Communication skills	I learned how to communicate with others. I used to be scared to speak in front of the room, but I learned how to be a speaker.
	I learned how to speak properly.

2. Research Question 2

"What recommendations do the program completers have concerning the type of instruction and training the program offers?" The survey asked respondents to offer comments, recommendations, or suggestions about the type of training the program offers. Space was provided for the written comments, and also included a statement that additional sheets should be used if necessary.

a. Written Comments Describing Recommendations to Improve the Program - In an open-ended question format, the completers were asked to offer comments (Table 38), recommendations or suggestions (Table 39) about the training they received. Of the 85 surveys, 66 included a response. These responses were grouped thematically into 11 categories labeled and described in the next two tables. Direct quotes from several of these respondents are included when these served to especially reinforce a point made by a number of respondents. A complete listing of the comments is included in Appendix H.

The 11 themes which emerged from the written responses are: improved self-esteem or motivation, supportive staff, preparation for further education or workplace, setting personal goals, improved communication skills, improved quality of instruction, meet individual needs of students, more class participation and group work, more motivational classes, focus on academic skills and develop job skills (Tables 38 and 39).

Table 38

Comments about the Job Readiness Program Cited by Participants

Area of comment	Sample statements
Improved self-esteem or motivation	The Readiness Program gave me the confidence to stand up for what I believe in. Any single parent or individual that needs to be self-sufficient or needs self-esteem should join the Job Readiness Program. I recommend the program because it really motivates and sets great moral examples in one's life.
Supportive staff	The teachers seem really sincere and make you feel like they really care a lot. That matters and helps. All the teachers and staff members of the program were so nice, understanding and very helpful. The Job Readiness Program is a good place to start because the teachers want to help you out a lot.
Preparation for further education or workplace	The program helped me brush up on English, math and reading. This program offers good training. It helped me get my GED and computer skills. I think it was a good program to go through and learn before you go into your regular courses.

(table continues)

Area of comment	Sample statements
Setting personal goals	I learned that you can't let others set your goals and career for you. I'm not letting nothing stand in the way of achieving my own goals in life. The most valuable learning was about myself, who I was and what my future goals were.
Improved communication skills	The motivation classes helped me communicate with groups of people. I communicate more with people now.

Table 39

Recommendations to Improve the Job Readiness Program Cited by Participants

Area of recommendation	Sample statements
Improve quality of instruction	Not as much homework from Mrs. X would be nice.
	I think there should be more homework because this is an adult training center and it would help if the person is going on to another school with study habits.
	When someone has a problem with a student, or if the students are doing something wrong, teachers should set time aside to talk with the student. They shouldn't wait until it is out of control.
	Some instructors are very insensitive and that offended me.
	The English class was very unorganized. I did not gain anything from it.
	Some teachers preached affirmative action and I feel that does not belong in a classroom setting.
Meet individual needs of students	You should have more one on one with students.
	I would suggest they better evaluate each student's needs. For example, if your reading and math skills need improvement, you should be put only in those classes. Have each student tell you their weaknesses and have them participate in classes they need.

(table continues)

Area of recommendation	Sample statements
Meet individual needs of students (cont.)	The only suggestion that I have is that if the type of further education that a student will be receiving after this program is known, then the academic part of this program should be geared toward that. Every student should not be forced to take all classes. It should be based on need.
More class participation and group work	I think there should be more classes where students work more as a group and can share the responsibility of being a leader. I think the instructors should encourage future students to ask questions. Let the students know that the instructors can help and guide them if they ask more questions. There should be more class participation.
More motivational classes	I think there should be more motivational classes. The motivational classes are a good idea to keep because many students had to be motivated to get and come to the program.
Focus on academic skills	Give people enough time in the program to learn or brush up on their skills. The math and English classes are very important. Everybody needs these classes to learn or brush up on.

(*table continues*)

Area of recommendation	Sample statements
Focus on academic skills (cont.)	I think comprehension is very important and your program should do more work on that. If I read better I wouldn't have so much trouble that I'm having now in my course. Not enough time was spent on math skills.
Develop job skills	I think the program should focus more on how to prepare for a job (interviewing) and what to expect on the job (getting along with others, communication, problems with supervisors or co-workers). Students should dress for success everyday. The program should be more sufficient if you made the computer classes to be mandatory.

3. Research Question 3

"Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?"

Each respondent was placed into groups based on employment status. Group one was identified as those employed and group two identified as not employed. In addition, participants were placed into groups based on school enrollment status. Group one was identified as those students who enrolled in another school after completing the program and group two identified as those not in school. (The term school refers to college, vocational school or other types of training programs.) For the comparison of responses between the two groups, a 2-tailed t-test was calculated. To determine if there were differences according to the employment status or school enrollment status, 2-tailed t-tests were used to evaluate the significance of the comparison of perceptions between the identified groups. The subjects' answers to the survey were analyzed to determine if differences did exist. In the 2-tailed t-test, if the 2-tail probability is smaller than .05, results are statistically significant (there is a difference between the two groups). The 2-tailed t-test represents probability that observed differences could occur strictly due to chance.

An examination of the survey responses according to employment status resulted in differences occurring in five questions from the survey instrument. The differences according to the employment status of the respondents is therefore presented in this section.

Tables 40-44 present the data for differences in the employment groups. Subjects responded to their degree of interest or improvement. Respondents utilized a 5-point rating scale where 5 = very much, 4 = quite a bit, 3 = a fair amount, 2 = not much, and 1 = not at all. These five tables represent those individual questions from the survey that, when analyzed, resulted in statistically significant differences between the two groups as determined by the 2-tailed t-test. In all five questions, when analyzed individually, members of the unemployed group reported higher mean scores than members of the employed group. Former students in the unemployed group overall reported that their interest level was higher and that their skills had improved more than the employed group.

a. Differences Between Employment Groups

Table 40

Differences of Employment Groups in Response to Question 12, "Did you find the time spent in the program to be interesting?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Employed	31	3.93	1.12	-2.16*
Unemployed	54	4.38	0.73	

* p < .05

Table 41

Differences of Employment Groups in Response to Question 19, "Was the reading class of help to you in improving skills?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Employed	30	3.94	1.14	-2.31*
Unemployed	54	4.44	0.86	

* p < .05

Table 42

Differences of Employment Groups in Response to Question 24, "To what extent did your writing skills improve?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Employed	30	3.20	1.19	-2.29*
Unemployed	53	3.78	0.93	

* p < .05

Table 43

Differences of Employment Groups in Response to Question 27, "To what extent did your learning skills improve?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Employed	29	3.40	1.27	-2.07*
Unemployed	53	3.95	1.00	

* p < .05

Table 44

Differences of Employment Groups in Response to Question 30, "To what extent did your teamwork skills improve?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Employed	30	3.33	1.30	-3.01*
Unemployed	53	4.11	1.01	

* p < .05

b. Differences in the Perceptions According to Enrollment Status - An examination of the survey responses according to status of school enrollment resulted in differences occurring in two questions from the survey instrument. The differences according to the school enrollment status of respondents is presented in Tables 45 and 46. These two tables represent the only two questions from the entire survey that, when analyzed, resulted in statistically significant differences between the two groups as determined by the 2-tailed t-test. In both questions, members of the enrolled group had higher mean scores than their counterparts. Former students in the enrolled group reported that they found the program to be more interesting and that their writing skills had improved more so than the group not enrolled (Tables 45 and 46).

Table 45

Differences of Enrollment Groups in Response to Question 12, "Did you find time in the program to be interesting?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Enrolled	50	4.40	0.78	2.33*
Not enrolled	35	3.94	1.02	

* $p < .05$

Table 46

Differences of Enrollment Groups in Response to Question 24, "To what extent did your writing skills improve?"

Number of responses		Mean	S.D.	t-value
Enrolled	49	3.80	0.95	2.30*
Not enrolled	34	3.28	1.14	

* $p < .05$

F. Qualitative Analysis Report

This section offers a further analysis of the data through a review of the qualitative findings of the survey responses. This qualitative report serves to further continue with the theme of the differences in perceptions which were reported in the preceding section dealing with the quantitative findings. Specifically, Research Question 3, "Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?"

Each respondent was placed into one employment group category--those who indicated they were currently employed, those who indicated they were not employed but were seeking employment, and those who indicated they were not employed and not seeking employment. Each respondent was also placed into one enrollment group category--those who indicated they were currently enrolled in a school or training program, and those who indicated they were not enrolled. The survey asked respondents to describe improvements in academic and personal development and the overall benefits they experienced as a result of their participation in the training program.

As reported in the preceding section, there were differences in perceptions that were evident in the analysis of questions from the survey. Therefore, this qualitative review will also examine the same questions that revealed previous differences to determine if the subjects' written responses to the open-ended choices may add further insight into this analysis. Survey questions under examination qualitatively are those dealing with reading skills, writing skills, learning skills, and teamwork skills.

The qualitative analysis report of other survey questions on the differences between the employment group and school enrollment group and found to be significantly important are presented in Appendix I.

1. Reading Improvement

In the area of reading, six areas of improvement emerged from the narrative responses of the subjects. These areas included enhancement of reading comprehension, reading more frequently, increase in reading level, improved oral reading skills, faster rates of reading, and improved vocabulary.

Improvement in reading level, oral reading, and reading rate were mentioned by two or fewer individuals within each employment status group. However, three areas of reading improvement appeared to be different based on employment status--reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and frequency of reading.

Among all subjects, it was indicated that reading comprehension had improved, but those who were not seeking employment were less likely to cite this area of improvement. Employed subjects and those seeking employment cited reading comprehension as responses at much higher and at similar rates, 25.8% and 17.9%, respectively.

Another area of difference appeared to be related to vocabulary development. This was not mentioned by any of the employed participants, but was cited by 17.6% of those not seeking employment and 10.3% of those seeking employment.

Finally, an increase in the frequency of reading was different across the three groups. Those not seeking employment (29.4%) were more than twice as likely to mention this improvement than those who were employed (12.9%) (see Tables 47, 48 and 49).

Table 47

Improvement in Reading Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Comprehension	I am understanding what I read now. I used to have trouble with tests when you read a paragraph and answer questions. But now I tested out of reading classes for CCAC. I learned how to pick out the main points and summarize what I read.
No change in reading	My reading skills were always on a pretty high level.
Read more frequently	It got me to read more books and newspapers. I read more books than I used to. The more I read the better I have become.
Reading level	My reading level was at 6th but when I got finished here it was at 12th level.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Reading level (cont.)	I went from 9 grade level to a 12 grade level in about 3 months.
Oral reading	I was more confident reading out loud. I feel better reading to my kids at bedtime.
Reading rate	Reading speed has improved. I don't read that much and I didn't realize how slow I had gotten. But now I'm faster.
Vocabulary	I learned new vocabulary words. I can pronounce more words than before. I learned medical terminology.

Table 48

Improvement in Reading Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

Area of improvement	Employed (31)		Seeking employment (35)		Not seeking employment (19)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	11	35.5	12	30.8	5	29.4
Comprehension	8	25.8	7	17.9	1	5.9
No change in reading	4	12.9	6	15.4	3	17.6
Read more frequently	4	12.9	6	15.4	5	29.4
Reading level	2	6.5	1	2.6	0	0.0
Oral reading	1	3.2	2	5.1	0	0.0
Reading rate	1	3.2	1	2.6	0	0.0
Vocabulary	0	0.0	4	10.3	3	17.6
(n) Responses	(31)		(39)		(17)	

Table 49

Improvement in Reading Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

Area of improvement	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
	n	%	n	%
No example given	13	23.6	15	40.5
No change in reading	11	20.0	2	5.4
Read more frequently	11	20.0	5	13.5
Comprehension	8	14.5	10	27.0
Vocabulary	8	14.5	0	0.0
Oral reading	2	3.6	1	2.7
Reading level	1	1.8	2	5.4
Reading rate	1	1.8	2	5.4
(n) Responses	(55)		(37)	

2. Writing Improvement

In the area of writing, six areas of improvement emerged from the narrative responses of the subjects. These areas included grammar, communicating ideas, vocabulary, organization and structure, preparing different types of writing, and spelling.

Overall, the employed participants were least likely to mention improvement in grammar, communicating ideas, use of vocabulary, organization and structure of writing, and preparing different types of writing. Preparing different types of writing was the most discrepant area, with 16.7% of the subjects not seeking employment describing this improvement while 11.1% of the seeking employment individuals and 3.2% of the employed participants cited it. In the area of vocabulary usage, differences also emerged. Responses of those not seeking employment (16.7%) were almost three times more likely to mention this improvement compared to the seeking employment group (5.6%) and five times more likely than the employed individuals (3.2%).

Spelling improvement by subjects was similar across all three groups; it was rarely mentioned as an area of improvement. None of the employed participants noted spelling and only one individual in each of the two remaining unemployed groups cited it as an area of improvement.

Table 50

Improvement in Writing Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Grammar	I learned punctuation, how to begin a sentence with a noun and a verb. They taught me correct verb usage, etc. I can write down a good sentence with proper nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc., better than I did before I came into the program.
Communicating ideas	I learned how to write more plainly so people can understand me. I was able to articulate with words much better. I express myself more.
Use of vocabulary	I now use more professional verbs, words.
No change in writing	I like writing. It only helped out a little.
Organization/structure	I re-learned how to do outlines. I've learned how to write various paragraphs. My writing is more structured and organized than before.

(*table continues*)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Preparing different types of writing	I learned how to write a beautiful letter. My writing skills improved because you had to write a lot of reports for English and math class. I can now write essays and put my writing skills into better use.
Spelling	After doing a lot of writing, I can spell better.

Table 51

Improvement in Writing Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

Area of improvement	Employed (31) n	Employed (31) %	Seeking employment (35) n	Seeking employment (35) %	Not seeking employment (19) n	Not seeking employment (19) %
No example given	22	71.0	12	33.3	3	16.7
Grammar	3	9.7	7	19.4	3	16.7
Communicating ideas	2	6.5	6	16.7	2	11.1
Use of vocabulary	1	3.2	2	5.6	3	16.7
No change in writing	1	3.2	1	2.8	1	5.6
Organization/structure	1	3.2	3	8.3	2	11.1
Preparing different types of writing	1	3.2	4	11.1	3	16.7
Spelling	0	0.0	1	2.8	1	5.6
(n) Responses	(31)		(36)		(18)	

Table 52

Improvement in Writing Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

Area of improvement	Currently enrolled (50) n	Currently enrolled (50) %	Not enrolled (35) n	Not enrolled (35) %
No example given	15	27.8	22	61.1
Grammar	11	20.4	4	11.1
Communicating ideas	10	18.5	3	8.3
Preparing different types of writing	7	13.0	1	2.8
Use of vocabulary	5	9.3	1	2.8
Organization/structure	3	5.6	3	8.3
No change in writing	2	3.7	1	2.8
Spelling	1	1.9	1	2.8
(n) Responses	(54)		(36)	

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3. Improvement in Learning Skills

In the area of learning skills (learning how to learn, problem solving and creativity), four areas of improvement surfaced from the narrative responses of the program completers. These thematic areas included study skills, problem solving, creativity and cooperative learning.

Improvement in problem solving was the most often written comment regarding this area of advancement. Problem solving was mentioned as a 13.4% response of the employed group, 26.5% of those seeking employment, and as a 27.8% response of individuals not seeking employment. Improvements in study skills was indicated by individuals within each employment status group.

In the school enrollment status group, problem solving was also mentioned by 23.0% of subjects currently enrolled and by 25.7% of subjects not enrolled. Creativity was an area of difference for this group with a 7.7% response rate of the enrolled students and a zero response from those not enrolled (see Tables 53, 54 and 55).

Table 53

Improvement in Learning Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Study skills	I picked up good study habits. My study habits improved like note taking. The PQRST method I learned here for studying helped me get high honors in nursing school.
Problem solving	I can analyze better now. I can use logic now in a simpler way. I learned to solve problems a lot faster and easier without lacking important information.
No change in learning skills	I still have problems in this area. My learning skills have always been excellent.
Creativity	It encouraged me to be more creative. Performances in classes made me more creative. I learned to be creative in everything I do.
Cooperative learning	I have learned to stay calm and be professional in a provoking situation. The program gives you a chance to work with others and learn how to exchange ideas and solutions.

Table 54

Improvement in Learning Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

Area of improvement	Employed (31)		Seeking employment (35)		Not seeking employment (19)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	17	56.7	14	41.2	10	55.5
Study skills	6	20.0	4	11.8	1	5.6
Problem solving	4	13.4	9	26.5	5	27.8
No change in learning skills	3	10.0	2	5.9	0	0.0
Creativity	0	0.0	3	8.8	1	5.6
Cooperative learning	0	0.0	2	5.9	1	5.6
(n) Responses	(30)		(34)		(18)	

Table 55

Improvement in Learning Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

Area of improvement	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
	n	%	n	%
No example given	22	42.3	21	60.0
Problem solving	12	23.0	9	25.7
Study skills	8	15.4	3	8.6
Creativity	4	7.7	0	0.0
No change in learning skills	3	5.8	2	5.7
Cooperative learning	3	5.8	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(52)		(35)	

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4. Improvement in Teamwork

In the area of teamwork, two major areas of improvement emerged from the open-ended area of responses of the former students. These areas are working with people who may be different than self and valuing benefits of teamwork.

Improvements in working with people was mentioned by eight of the former students seeking employment and four of the employed individuals. Improvement in the area of valuing benefits of teamwork was indicated by individuals within each employment status group.

An area of difference occurred in the theme of working with people who may be different where it was mentioned by 24.2% of the group seeking employment and not mentioned at all by the group not seeking employment (see Tables 56, 57 and 58).

Table 56

Improvement in Teamwork Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
No change in teamwork skills	I was already able to work with others well. I was always a team player. Didn't really have a problem there.
Working with people who may be different than self	I have learned to become more patient with other people who may have different ideas. I adjust better to all the different personalities and backgrounds of people. I am now able to handle myself with people who are not so easy to get along with.
Valuing benefits of teamwork	I have learned that I can gain valuable insight from others and give valuable insight to someone else. I realized that you need others to help and that two brains are better than one. I learned that if you work together, you can get more accomplished.

Table 57

Improvement in Teamwork Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

Area of improvement	Employed (31) n	Employed (31) %	Seeking employment (35) n	Seeking employment (35) %	Not seeking employment (19) n	Not seeking employment (19) %
No example given	15	50.0	14	42.4	8	47.1
No change in teamwork	7	23.3	2	6.1	6	35.3
Working with people who may be different than self	4	13.3	8	24.2	0	0.0
Valuing benefits of teamwork	4	13.3	9	27.3	3	17.6
(n) Responses	(30)		(33)		(17)	

Table 58

Improvement in Teamwork Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

Area of improvement	Currently enrolled (50) n	Currently enrolled (50) %	Not enrolled (35) n	Not enrolled (35) %
No example given	19	38.0	20	57.1
Working with people who may be different than self	12	24.0	3	8.6
Valuing benefits of teamwork	10	20.0	6	17.1
No change in teamwork	9	18.0	6	17.1
(n) Responses	(50)		(35)	

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V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This concluding chapter presents a review and discussion of the overall survey findings, draws conclusions from the analysis of the data, elaborates upon implications of the findings, and offers recommendations based on the conclusions from the study.

This study focused on the topic of employability training and job readiness, as it related to adult students who participated in an instructional program. The primary purpose of the study was to identify and analyze perceptions of program completers as to their impressions of the instruction they received.

The population consisted of 150 adult students who completed a Job Readiness Training Program. From the population of 150 students, 85 surveys were completed for a response rate of 56.7%.

A questionnaire was developed to gather responses directly linked to the statement of the problem, the literature review and the research questions. The data were collected by sending the questionnaire to program completers as well as follow-up visitations by the researcher to other various training program sites.

A. Summary of the Data

The data related to the background of the participants revealed that females far outnumbered males, with 92% female respondents and only 8% male respondents. The average age of the subjects was 31.06 with an age range of 20 - 54. Of the total sample, 58.8% were Black, 35.3% White, 2.4% Asian/ Pacific Islander and 3.5% Other (multiracial).

In reference to the marital status of the program completers, 64.7% were single, 16.5% married, 16.5% divorced and 2.4% widowed. The number of dependent children living at home ranged from 0 - 4, with 35.3% reporting 1 child, 18.8% 2 children, 18.8% 3 children, 10.6% 4 children and 16.5% with no children.

The subjects were asked about their employment history prior to enrollment and 72.9% reported having had a work history, with 27.1% having never worked. At the time of the survey, 41.2% of the respondents were unemployed and actively seeking work, and 22.4% were unemployed and not seeking work. Those employed full-time consisted of 17.6%, with a part-time employment rate of 18.8%.

In regard to school enrollment, 58.8% of the participants reported they were attending a school or training program. When asked about Public Assistance, 70.6% of the subjects reported they were receiving benefits.

It should be noted that when asked if they were currently enrolled in school, 58.8% of the respondents answered affirmatively. This high percentage of respondents who were in school at the time of the survey is indicative of the nature of the training program. The Job Readiness Program is designed to prepare students to be able to enter another school or training program upon completion which then leads to eventual job placement. Therefore, it should also be noted that of the 22.4% of the respondents who reported that they were unemployed and not seeking work, all 19 of the subjects were enrolled on a full-time basis in a school or training program.

When asked about why they chose to enroll in the Job Readiness Program, most students gave three or four reasons for attending. The top three responses consisted of 68.2% to continue education, 61.2% to learn new skills, and 55.3% to seek employment.

More specifically, the study answered the following research questions:

1. What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:
    a. Usefulness of the instruction and training they received while in the program?
    b. Skills acquired by participating in the program, including helpfulness in preparing for continuing education or job search activities? (In the areas of: (1) reading, writing, and computation, (2) communication skills, (3) learning-to-learn skills, including problem solving and creative thinking,

(4) self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting, (5) teamwork skills, (6) leadership skills, and (7) organizational effectiveness.)

   c. Benefits that they received by attending and completing the program?

2. What recommendations do the program completers have concerning the type of instruction and training the program offers?

3. Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?

B. Discussion and Summary of Findings

In this section, the author summarizes the findings with the purpose of answering the research questions. The discussion and summary of findings are presented in the order of the research questions, followed by conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Research Question 1a

What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:

a. Usefulness of the instruction and training they received while in the program?

When asked about the usefulness of the program, a great majority of the completers indicated their instruction to be useful. Results of the survey showed that 42.4% of the subjects reported "very much," 29.4% "quite a bit," and 22.4% "a fair amount." The mean score for this question was 4.07. These findings appear to indicate that the respondents perceived the program to be useful.

An examination of the open-ended responses resulted in written comments reflecting usefulness of the problem like "it helped my study skills," "learned a lot of new things," "learned a lot about preparing myself more for the business world," "prepared me for working with others," "the program was able to prepare me for a job," "it prepared me for continuing my education" and "became open minded, willing and enthusiastic about my future." This type of responses seems to show that the program was useful for the participants primarily in terms of future application.

Research Question 1b

What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:

b. Skills acquired by participating in the program, including helpfulness in preparing for continuing education or job search activities? (In the areas of: (1) reading, writing, and computation, (2) communication skills, (3) learning-to-learn skills, including problem solving and creative thinking, (4) self-esteem, motivation, goal-setting, (5) teamwork skills, (6) leadership skills, and (7) organizational effectiveness.)

In reference to skills acquired by participating in the program, 45.9% of the respondents reported the program to be of "very much" help in gaining new skills, followed by 24.7% who selected "a fair amount." A similar question also asked for an overall indication of new skills being acquired and 55.3% of the former participants credited the program as helping "very much" in this area, followed by a "quite a bit" response rate of 20.0%.

Seven major skill areas were identified in the literature review which then became the theme of the skills that were referenced on the questionnaire. The survey asked for perceptions as to the extent a various skill or skill area improved. Overall, improvement was indicated in each respective skill area. This was evident in the few responses that were recorded in the "not at all" category. Collectively, the "not at all" responses ranged from a low of 1.2% to a high of 7.2%. The 1.2% selection of "not at all" was found in the questions dealing with the skills of math, communications, and motivation, whereas, the 7.2% response rate of "not at all" was related to the skill of leadership.

When asked about the extent of improvement in the identified skill areas, a majority of respondents answered each question favorably. The favorable responses became evident in the mean scores and the frequency of scores found in the most positive areas of "very much" and "quite a bit."

More specifically, the mean scores of the 5-point Likert scale for individual questions pertaining to the improvement of skills were as follows: reading = 3.78, writing = 3.58, math = 3.99, communication = 4.06, learning skills = 3.76, self-esteem = 4.04, motivation = 4.22, teamwork = 3.83, leadership = 3.45, and effectiveness = 3.61.

As cited by the participants, these mean scores reflect perceptions that are on the high end of the 5-point Likert scale. These favorable responses seem to indicate that the instruction and training received by the enrollees resulted in a perceived level of improvement from their point of entry.

As evidenced in the literature review section of this study, the workplace of today has undergone substantial change and there is an increased need for higher skill levels. As a result of employer demands for a more skilled workforce, there is now more of an awareness of the type of skills that are necessary to enter or re-enter the workplace.

The overall theme of the training program emphasizes employability skills that are related to the changing world of work. When questioned about their employability skills learned in the program, the findings point toward a positive perception as expressed by the participants. The skill areas that were examined through the survey relate to the various topics of classroom instruction and are a part of the integrative curriculum of the program's goals. The instructional themes of the program were found to be related to an analysis done by Saterfiel and McLarty (1995). They wrote about the importance of employability skills being matched with the needs of the employer and those possessed by the prospective employee. They elaborated on these skills by stating:

> The term "employability skills" refers to those skills required to acquire and retain a job. In the past, employability skills were considered primarily of a vocational or job-specific nature; they were not thought to include the academic skills most commonly taught in schools. Current thinking, however, has broadened the definition to include not only many foundational academic skills, but also a variety of attitudes and habits. Recent usage of the term has described the preparation of foundational skills upon which a person must build job-specific skills. These skills include: communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and management of organizational processes. Ever growing numbers of employers are assessing these skills, primarily in reading and mathematics, prior to hiring. (p. 24)

Research Question 1c

What opinions and attitudes do the program completers have about the job readiness training they received in the program with respect to:

c. Benefits that they received by attending and completing the program?

The survey asked the subjects about benefits related to the program. When questioned about how much they benefited from the program, 57.1% of the respondents answered "very much," followed by 25.0% with "quite a bit." This 82.1% response rate is indicative of the positive impact that the program had on the completers.

This finding is related to the research of Malicky and Norman (1996). In their investigation of adult literacy program participants they discovered that there were benefits related to program participation. When asked about the most important benefit they gained from participation, the most frequent responses were academic improvement and enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence. 92.1% of the subjects in their survey reported that they felt better about themselves. In addition, in relation to academic effects, they found an increase in the ability of students to communicate better as a result of attending the programs under investigation.

Participants of the Job Readiness Program reported gains in their self-esteem as well. The most frequently cited response to the question about improved self-esteem resulted in a 46.4% citation of "very much," followed by a 26.2% in the "quite a bit" scale. There appears to be a sense of self-respect and feelings of self-worth that are related to participation and the resultant sense of accomplishment as expressed by the former students of the program. Several of the themes established in the qualitative answers led to the mentioning of improvement in such areas as self-confidence, positive outlook and a self discovery. An examination of the qualitative areas of the survey reflected phrases like "I feel I am doing something with my life now," "I believe in myself now," "I feel great about myself and think positive things" and "I learned a lot about myself and how I felt." In addition to benefits of increased self-esteem, program completers also reported improvements in communication skills with 74.3% of total response in the "very much" (40.2%) and "quite a bit" (34.1%) categories.

The benefits that were cited and also the mean score of 4.04 in the area of self-esteem improvement represent that participation in the program led to a greater sense of self. This affective category of feelings, attitudes and emotions acknowledges the sense of accomplishment and pride that occurred through program involvement.

This finding is consistent with those of Young et al. (1994). They conducted a national evaluation of adult education programs and found that approximately one-third of participants reported employment-related benefits from program participation. In addition, the evaluation found that the programs were credited with improving clients' reading, employment, and self-concept levels.

In addition, the importance of self-esteem in job readiness programs is addressed by Carnevale et al. (1990). Examples of successful workplace training programs offering self-esteem instruction are discussed. This approach allows trainees to discover and develop their own strengths and abilities which leads toward pride in achievement through a positive self-perception. The authors recommend that self-esteem training should be an integral part of job training programs that serve the unemployed and economically disadvantaged clientele. The authors assert:

> Public programs are probably the source of most training to enhance adults' self-esteem. Most of these programs have been developed under funding from the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). JTPA programs also provide other job-readiness training to targeted groups.

> Although the various programs differ somewhat because they are run by different local agencies and organizations with diverse trainees, they all share the same objective: to help their clients become more employable. JTPA programs characteristically have well-defined curricula tested and measured results that show them to be generally successful in improving participants' self-esteem. (p. 228)

Research Question 2

What recommendations do the program completers have concerning the type of instruction and training the program offers?

The survey asked subjects for written comments to offer recommendations or suggestions about the training they received. Space was provided for a response along with a statement that additional sheets should be used if necessary. Of the 85 surveys, 66 included a response. The responses were grouped thematically and the subjects offered recommendations in six areas. These areas included recommendations to improve quality of instruction, meet individual needs of students, include more class participation/group work, offer more motivational classes, focus on academic skills and develop job skills. Appendix H offers all of the 66 responses in a transcript fashion.

Research Question 3

Are there differences in the perceptions of program completers according to their current status, particularly (a) employed vs. unemployed, and (b) enrolled in another school or training program vs. not enrolled in another school or training program?

Each participant in the Job Readiness Program was placed into groups based on employment and school enrollment status. These groupings were based on the status of the program completers at the time the questionnaire was completed. Upon program completion, the student then enters another phase of training at the post-secondary level. Throughout the various phases of training, job placement is the primary objective. Therefore, the status is based upon each program completer's situation at the time of responding to the survey.

To determine if there were differences according to employment status or school enrollment status, 2-tailed t-tests were used to evaluate the significance of the comparison of perceptions between the identified groups. In addition, in the qualitative areas of response, each group's answers to open-ended questions were organized into various themes and common areas in relationship to differences of perceptions.

Differences in the perceptions according to employment status were evident in only five areas. Differences occurred in the perceptions of the level of student interest, and in the extent of improvement in reading, writing, learning skills and teamwork skills. In all five areas, members of the unemployed group reported higher mean scores than members of the employed group. This resulted in former students in the unemployed group overall reporting that their interest level was higher and that their skills had improved more than the employed group.

A possible explanation for this occurrence may be due to the level of skills upon entry into the program. It is possible that the now employed group may have been in possession of higher skills upon enrolling in the program and thus viewed the program as less interesting and that their perceptions of skill improvement were less because of a higher level at the beginning of their training. Also, this may have resulted in more of a likelihood of successful job acquisition.

Differences in the perceptions according to enrollment status were evident in only two areas. Differences occurred in the perceptions of the level of student interest and in the extent of improvement in writing skills. In both areas, members of the enrolled group had higher mean scores than their counterparts. Former students in the enrolled group reported that they found the program to be more interesting and that their writing skills had improved more so than the group not enrolled.

A possible explanation for this occurrence may be due to the actual application and connection of the job readiness training to their current school activity. It is possible that the enrolled group may have perceived the program to be more interesting and that their writing skills improved because of the application. The enrolled group would in more likelihood be using their writing skills in relationship to their schooling. The interest level may have been perceived as higher because of the connection to their current status of attending school.

C. Discussion

In the field of education and training, there is a movement to better prepare workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The creation of a world-class workforce is being emphasized as a vital necessity by many policy makers. Baker and Reed (1994) called for an organized movement to combine the efforts of special interest groups with providers of education and training to respond to the needs of employers. They indicate that at the core of the economic situation is a large, underprepared workforce that is not prepared to meet the challenges of the future. In their call for enhanced education to ensure a world-class workforce, they contend:

> The management structure for public education needs revision to ensure that statewide legislative, oversight, and management agencies have appropriate authority and effectively cooperate to produce an educated and motivated citizenry. At the state level, legislatures must redefine the mission of various state agencies to conform to a model of continuous education without overlapping responsibilities. Federal programs such as the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Program, the Job Training Partnership Act, and various job skills and apprenticeship programs must become full partners in the educational process and not separate efforts. (p. 35)

In the planning and creation stages of the Job Readiness Program, just such consideration was given for the implementation of the training program. Initially, various officials from the funding source, the private sector and the college met to identify local needs of employers. Through these planning meetings, the idea for job readiness training developed and led to the actual creation and implementation of the program.

The results of this study on participants' perceptions appears to indicate that these efforts have been successful. This validation of the program by the actual participants serves as recognition and acknowledgement that the program is effective.

The model of training provided by the Job Readiness Program seem to be relevant and appropriate. The participants' impressions of the training they received verifies the relevancy of the program. These findings are consistent with recommendations by Grubb (1995). He reported on the results of a nationwide evaluation of job training programs and concluded that in order to improve job training programs, they must include certain elements to be more effective. The author asserts that:

> The following elements were concluded to provide a vision for guiding job training programs; inclusion of academic instruction, skills training integrated with academic (or remedial) instruction, and work-based education coordinated with instruction through "connecting activities"; connection of all programs in a hierarchy of education and training opportunities; and use of applied teaching methods and team teaching strategies. (p. 14)

The above recommendations are indicators of elements that are included in the design of the CCAC Job Readiness Program. The program provides the necessary combination of academic instruction along with the emphasis of skills training. The program's overall curriculum and training connects the cognitive and affective areas within the classroom instruction and applied teaching methods through a team teaching approach.

D. Implications

This study offers information relating to employability skills necessary to enter or re-enter the job market. The findings generated from the perceptions of unemployed adult students who participated in a job readiness training program provide further insight into their viewpoints concerning their experiences. This information should be of interest to individuals who deal with unemployed adult students. The students' perceptions should be of particular value to personnel affiliated with job readiness type training programs. Knowledge of the participants' perceptions of themselves in relationship to their training, the benefits of participation and their improvement of skills offer insightful details.

The review of the literature verified that the world of work has changed. Employers want a new type of worker, possessing a broad set of skills. This study has presented the profile of necessary employability skills identified as being essential in today's workforce.

Carnevale et al. (1990) believe that workers are being challenged as never before and they emphasized the importance of a broad set of skills to enable them to acquire and maintain employment. There are challenges for those already employed and even greater difficulties for the unemployed and disadvantaged. In addressing the new demands of work, they state:

> Perhaps the most devastating impact of basic workplace deficiencies falls upon the disadvantaged who are outside the economic mainstream and struggling to get in. For those attempting to enter the workforce and those who have been displaced from their jobs, such deficiencies inhibit entry into productive and well-paying work, pinning the disadvantaged at the bottom of the economic heap. The "upskilling" of work in America is driven by technical changes, innovation, a sense of heightened competition.
>
> ...it is easy to see that new skills must be applied if employees--and their employers--are to succeed in the marketplace. In fact, one might even say that a new kind of American worker is being ordered up, a worker who will be expected to have a broad set of skills that were previously required only of supervisors and managers. (pp. 3-4)

Therefore, this investigation into the participants' perceptions of skills learned in the program has presented further realization of the importance of their experiences. This study demonstrated the value of obtaining feedback from the program completers. It is believed that the study reported herein provides a credible basis for further insight, and understanding of participants in these types of programs. The results of this study can be used for ideas in the areas of program planning, curriculum design, and possible decision making as it pertains to implementing training in employability skills and job readiness preparation.

E. Program Implications

Based on the data obtained in this study and the review of the literature, various program implications can be drawn which can also serve as guidelines for possible future decision making. The findings from this study indicate that overall the participants found their learning experience to be useful, beneficial and that skills were acquired through participation in the program. This appears to be an acknowledgement and endorsement from the respondents that the program was effective in meeting their needs.

In response to survey items concerning the quality and benefit of the training, 45.9% of the completers reported the training to be excellent and 57.1% reported the program to be of very much benefit. These findings seem to signify that a high level of satisfaction occurred with the training and that the completers gained from their experience.

Responses indicate that 83.5% of the program completers believed that instructors always gave help when needed. In addition, a majority of the open-ended responses offered positive comments and examples about the staff's dedication and commitment to teaching and the impact of the classroom learning that occurred. These findings reflect highly on the program's instructional staff members.

As discussed in the literature review section, today's workplace is characterized as one of high demands and increased standards of skills necessary to function successfully in a job setting. It was interesting to note that most respondents reported benefits in acquiring new skills and that overall they benefited from the program. It appears from the findings that the program is adequately providing instruction and training that is advantageous to the participants.

Another implication is that the increased demands of the workplace have also led to increased competition for the jobs that are available. Through an increased awareness of employer's expectations of employees and the identification of the types of skills that are now necessary in the workplace, a greater understanding of these factors will benefit future students who enroll in the program.

The discovery that overall, the program completers found the program of help in gaining new skills should be noted. Evidently, the instruction and training that is provided is viewed in a productive sense by the completers. This finding may suggest that the instructional design and teaching methodology is adequately achieving its purpose and intent.

It is suggested that the program's administration may want to further examine and consider the recommendations made from the respondents. The subjects offered recommendations in six areas. These areas included comments to improve quality of instruction, meet individual needs of students, include more class participation/group work, offer more motivational classes, focus on academic skills and develop job skills. These areas are presented as possible ideas for future planning purposes to make the program even more effective and to further meet the needs of all participants. Having feedback provided directly from participants who experienced the training can be very meaningful in terms of offering key insights as to the best type of training that should be available for the program's current students.

F. Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions resulting from this study, recommendations for further research are presented for the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding of the employability skills in relationship to the ever changing job market, and the perceptions of participants preparing for employment. The areas suggested for further research include:

1. A replication of this study at other job readiness programs in Allegheny County. A similar training model is in place at the Downtown Center of the Community College of Allegheny County and an investigation of its participants' perceptions would be an interesting comparison.
2. A similar study using community colleges in other geographical areas.
3. A similar investigation, perhaps using different research methodology that is not limited to a descriptive survey approach would be worthy of conducting.
4. More in-depth research in the area of actually measuring skills of participants, perhaps through a pre-test and post-test measurement of skills, utilizing an actual test or assessment tool.
5. It is recommended that a further investigation of the impact of training in the affective area needs to be examined. The combination and the emphasis on both the affective and cognitive ares of learning appears to be an effective approach to training.

6. A study of students currently enrolled in the Job Readiness Training Program.
7. In order to develop even more appropriate training programs for adults, there is a need for research on the long-term impact of their participation in these programs. Perhaps a study of the employment success of former students in terms of job retention and/or advancement would be pertinent.
8. Another study not limited to participants' perceptions which closely examines the effectiveness of the Job Readiness Program is recommended. These data generated from participants' perceptions appear to validate the program's level of success and effectiveness. A closer look at actually documenting the results of the program in terms of job placements and its overall success is worthy of pursuing.
9. It is recommended that a different time frame of conducting another investigation be pursued. Another study using the same population of this study is worthy of consideration. It would be of interest to conduct a five year follow-up study with the same subjects to determine their perceptions and current status.
10. The time frame of this study occurred prior to the mandated Federal Welfare Reform initiatives that are now in effect. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted to determine the impact of the welfare reform movement on program participants.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Dear Former Student:

Would you please help by answering some questions about the Community College of Allegheny County's (CCAC) "Job Readiness Training Program" which you completed? As a former student of the CCAC Braddock Center's Job Readiness Training Program, your ideas and opinions are important.

I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree at the University of Pittsburgh. As the researcher for this study, I am investigating participants' perceptions of the education and services that are offered in the program. Your help is very important because you were enrolled in the program recently and can tell me first-hand about the training you received.

In this study, your assessment of the job readiness program can help to determine its effectiveness and to see if any improvements can be made.

Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire, place it in the enclosed postage paid envelope and return it in the mail?

Your decision to answer the questionnaire is completely voluntary on your part. Your answers will be kept confidential; only group data, no person's name, will be reported. Do not sign your name to the form to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. If you have any questions in reference to this survey, please call me at the CCAC Braddock Center, 271-7368 or 271-7373.

Please help the program to better serve the students by participating in this survey. I look forward to reviewing the completed questionnaires. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Thomas (Tom) Staszewski
CCAC Training Coordinator/Instructor
and doctoral student at the
University of Pittsburgh

cc: CCAC Program Director

University of Pittsburgh

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM TO ACT AS A PARTICIPANT IN A STUDY FOR THOMAS F. STASZEWSKI

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The purpose of this study is to identify perceptions of program completers toward current employability skill levels and benefits gained as a result of classroom instruction. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be one of approximately 100 program completers being questioned. Please review the following statements regarding your participation in this study.

1. I understand this is a release of information form required by the University of Pittsburgh in order that Thomas F. Staszewski may gather data to complete his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

2. Risks and benefits: There are no risks involved in your participation in this study. The benefits of data obtained from this study will be useful to educators, administrators and others desiring insight into this subject. I am aware that I am free to refuse to participate in this study.

3. Confidentiality: I understand that any data obtained from this research will be kept in strict confidence, and that my identity will not be revealed in any description or publication.

4. Right to end participation: If at any time during this research I choose to discontinue my participation, I fully understand that I am free to do so, without any obligation.

5. I, ____________________________, have read the above conditions, fully understand them and do hereby consent to participate in this research study of my own will and accord.

I certify that I have read the preceding and that I understand its content. Any questions I have pertaining to the research have been and will be answered by Thomas F. Staszewski. My signature below means that I fully agreed to participate in this study.

Participant's signature______________________ Date __________

(Please return this form in the attached postage-paid envelope to: Tom Staszewski, CCAC Job Readiness Program, 640 Braddock Avenue (7th Floor), Braddock, PA 15104. Thank you.)

APPENDIX D

REMINDER LETTER

TO: Former Students Enrolled in the Community College of Allegheny County Job Readiness Training Program Braddock Center

FROM: Tom Staszewski, Training Coordinator/Instructor and Student at the University of Pittsburgh

RE: Questionnaire about the Job Readiness Training Program - Reminder

DATE: June 7, 1996

Recently you were sent a Questionnaire and a postage paid envelope asking for your impressions of the instruction you received while enrolled in the Job Readiness Training Program.

I am writing to ask you if you would please complete the questionnaire and return it to me at your earliest convenience. Your comments are important and will provide help in analyzing the effectiveness of the training program.

If you need a copy of the questionnaire, or have any questions, please contact me at 271-7368, 271-7373 or in the evening at 824-5082.

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP COVER LETTER

July 8, 1996

Dear Former Student of the Job Readiness Training Program:

I am writing to ask a favor of you. Would you please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the postage paid envelope that is provided?

I realize that your time is precious and that you are probably very busy. If you could please respond, I would greatly appreciate your efforts.

This letter is a "follow-up" to my previous correspondence to you. I am in the finalization stages of my study of the Job Readiness Training Program and **your comments are very important to me. The information that you can offer will add tremendously to the overall study. So far, over seventy (70) former students have responded. I would certainly welcome your questionnaire for further details on your impressions of the training program.**

Your comments will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in the study. Your impressions will be included in the overall scoring data on an anonymous basis.

I hope this letter finds you well and that you are enjoying the summer weather. I look forward to receiving your questionnaire.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 271-7368, 271-7373 or at home 824-5082.

Sincerely,

Tom Staszewski
Training Coordinator/Instructor and
Doctoral Student at the University of Pittsburgh

APPENDIX F

THANK YOU LETTER

TO: Former Job Readiness Training Program Student

FROM: Tom Staszewski, Training Coordinator/Instructor and Student at the University of Pittsburgh

RE: Research Study Questionnaire/Survey
"Thank you for your assistance"

DATE: July 18, 1996

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to the questionnaire. Your help and assistance is greatly appreciated. I am very grateful that you were willing to complete the questionnaire and return it to me. A sincere thanks for your efforts.

Good luck to you in all of your future endeavors.

APPENDIX G

WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS REGARDING BENEFITS

Each survey respondent was asked to explain how much they benefited from the program. The actual question from the survey is as follows:

> Question 36. Overall, how much did you benefit from the program? Please explain your answer to question 36 in the space below:

For identification each written response was assigned a number. Transcription of the responses follows:

0001 "Very much." I benefited a lot. Before I came here I had no skills in computer or anything else. They helped me get to where I am today.

0002 "Very much." I feel that I have learned some invaluable information about job searching, resume & cover letter writing, and motivation.

0003 "Very much." It has helped me to do Math better and for that I am grateful and I really think my confidence is a lot better.

0004 "Very much." It helped me realize that I can look for a better and Great job in my life and be happy in what I'm doing all day long.

0005 "Quite a bit." Well I think that I benefit a lot because in all different subjects I learn new things about a lot of stuff.

0006 "Very much." Met nice people... Learned a lot of new things... Operated a computer for first time...

0007 "Very much." This program benefited me a lot of ways. The program built me physically & mentally.

0008 "Very much." The program got me ready for CCAC Downtown MH-MR Program which I finished in Nov. 1995. It helped my study skills. And to make the Dean's List.

0009 "Very much." Socialization has always been a problem for me and being in this program prepared me for working with others.

0010 "Very much." Learned more of math, reading, and English skills.

0011 "Very much." Because I learned how to communicate with others. I used to be scared to speak in front of the room but I learned how to be a speaker.

0012 "Quite a bit." I learned a lot about preparing myself more for the business world.

0013 "Not much." I never lost focus on getting the most program. I met with resistance anything outside the focus.

0014 "Quite a bit." I've learned new math skills, improved on my English & learned to work in a group environment.

0015 "Quite a bit." Hopefully, with the help & education I have received from this program I will be able to find better employment.

0016 "Very much." My confidence is high. The program opened my eyes to the world around me.

0017 "Quite a bit." I was still hoping to learn how to comprehend what I read better, but I didn't.

0018 "Quite a bit." I haven't finish my training program as of yet so I can't really speak on it until I receive my certificate to go on.

0019 "Very much." I learned a lot, and brushed up on many subjects I had forgotten about.

0020 "Very much." I've been out of school for 26 years. Learning all the skills that I've learned in Job Readiness is the best start that I could of gotten for a fresh start in seeking employment or education.

0021 "Very much." From job readiness--to the MOST Program-to graduation next June.

0022 "A fair amount." The biggest benefit of the program for me was brushing up on Math and English. It helped a lot with the program I am now in.

0023 "A fair amount." It helped with self-esteem, motivation, determination. It made me realize I need to further my education in order to be more job marketable.

0024 "Quite a bit." I did learn new things that now help me in furthering my education but some things I feel I already had knowledge of.

0025 "A fair amount." I feel that it covered all what we learned in H.S. by going over it again to help us in our next course we would go into.

0026 "Very much." Brush up courses, motivation techniques, reading skills, etc...

0027 "Quite a bit." It showed me skills that I never thought I would need or use in my lifetime.

0028 "Very much." Before I entered into the Program I was a dreamer with nothing to go on. Now I am a mover with everything to go on.

0029 "Very much." The program was able to help me prepare for a job.

0030 "Very much." It prepared me for continuing my education by getting me used to the pressures of deadlines in school.

0031 "Very much." I know that it was time well spent and I plan to continue my education further.

0032 "Quite a bit." I was more determined to finish and find employment.

0033 "Very much." I really received a lot of knowledge and skills in various fields of activities from this CCAC Boyce Campus Braddock, PA Job Readiness Program.

0034 "Very much." The time I spent in the Job Readiness program was great. I learned more about myself and other people and I enjoyed myself there.

0035 "Very much." I learned a lot, for instance, in Personal development. It helped me to be aware of others sensitivity. The rest of the classes, I learned a lot too. I enjoyed all the teachers.

0037 "Very much." I'm learning a skill, and I like challenge.

0038 "Not much." Wasn't in the program long enough to evaluate it properly.

0039 "Very much." I feel this program is a good program just to loosening you up, get you around the rough edges so you won't be so nervous.

0040 "Not much." I haven't been here long enough to answer objectively.

0041 "Very much." Becoming more assertive.

0042 "Very much." In the Job Readiness Program, the biggest asset I received was goal setting. Now I set a goal and stick to it.

0047 "A fair amount." I feel I benefited only because I am a go-getter and very serious about my financial stability. I was able to stay focused, despite one particular instructor treating us adults as children.

0049 "Very much." I learned a lot about other people and their needs. I also learned how to manage my time and speak and dress properly.

0051 "Very much." I was able to improve all my learning skills. I don't think I would have been strong enough in school without it.

0054 "Very much." I became open minded, willing and enthusiastic about my future.

0055 "Quite a bit." I just was out of school for a long time and I was afraid to go back because I wasn't smart enough and I realized that I could do it with a Positive Attitude which I learned there.

0068 "Very much." This program is "very" helpful for those who take advantage of the things being taught. It is as beneficial as an individual makes it.

0070 "Very much." Without this program I would have never been able to go to finish school. It made me believe in myself.

0073 "Quite a bit." Well first, it prepared me for my higher education (college), second, through the program I met a lot of people and became friends and third, the program probably in some way prepared me for a job.

0079 "A fair amount." The Reading teacher Mrs. X is very dedicated to her work and is always willing to help, but some of your staff has very bad attitudes and some of them are very helpful.

0082 "Very much." At first I had no trust, no confidence. I had no way of knowing I could even learn what they taught me. I had given up at my age. I was 50 then. I had always wanted my diploma. I quit school in the 11th grade, and with everything I had I still missed having my 12 grade diploma. So I heard of Spock and went to school and finished my education for the 12th grade. I loved that so much I just keep on going. Finished at Braddock where I learned so very much of everything that you do need when you keep going on for more education. And I did, thanks to Braddock. I went to CCAC and got my CNA degree and I learned so very much there, too, it was a beautiful school and the patience they have with you to teach you how to survive in this life and go out in it. P.S., please excuse the writing when I write what comes from my heart I write fast. And also some of my spelling.

0089 "Quite a bit." The program helped me with my motivation skills and helped in my going on to college by encouraging me and giving me some of the skills I needed.

0090 "Quite a bit." I really learned a lot here academically and professionally.

0094 "Very much." I learned a lot about myself.

0096 "Very much." JR helped me to acquire many skills mostly all of which are transferable to my education & my job. I can also teach my daughters these skills.

0098 "A fair amount." I believe there is nothing I can't do as long as I keep trying.

0104 "Very much." I got an education that will help my future for myself and my kids. I have something to look forward to.

0107 "Very much." The excellent care and time each teacher gave us as individuals, needing any special attention, increased my confidence and willpower to succeed!

0108 "Quite a bit." I've completed my education, and now I am ready to reach my goals.

0110 "Quite a bit." The program motivated me to push forward in life and gave me hope, when I was confused and didn't have any direction.

0111 "A fair amount." My skills were improved where I lacked the proper attention, also I learned a lot of new material that I didn't know.

0113 "Very much." Ms. X prepared my new and improved image, & the instructors & administration prepared me for every day life, above & beyond the call of duty.

0115 "A fair amount." In this program the teachers were really helpful. They showed me how to be self-sufficient in everyday life. I did understand some things, but they (teachers) were there to help.

0116 "Very much." I was on welfare. Me and my child didn't have a clue on where to start. I enrolled and now I'm employed and have the motivation and know how to go further in my career choice.

0121 "Very much." I have all the skills rolled into one to make me a better person, employee, mother, and wife.

0125 "Quite a bit." Even though I was a college student prior to entering the Job Readiness Training program, I learned some of the most valuable ideas in this program. The Motivational class encouraged me and helped me the most in giving me the desire to obtain my future goals.

0133 "Very much." I needed a lot of work in the personal development, self-esteem, and motivation skills. I could still benefit from those classes & look forward to coming back.

0135 "Very much." I have learned a great deal from the teachers as well as the students. Thanks very much. Good Job!

0136 "Very much." I've upgraded my education, and I've learned a new skill to prepare me for my career.

0138 "Very much." Mathematics skills and the reference of CCAC.

0140 "A fair amount." I had already graduated from college and was actively seeking employment on my own before I started the program. It just kept me busy until I found a job.

0141 "Not much." The reason for entering the program was to refresh my memory on Math. Not enough time was spent on my problem area. I was misled about the program and forced to sit in on classes that I did not need.

0145 "Very much." This program has benefited me a lot. It showed my that I can be anything that I want if you really set your heart into doing it.

0148 "Very much." It helped me become more happy and good study skills.

0150 "Quite a bit." It keeps you motivated.

APPENDIX H

WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Each survey respondent was asked to offer comments, recommendations, or suggestions about the training they received. The actual question from the survey is as follows:

> Question 37. What comments, recommendations, or suggestions do you have about the type of training the program offers?

For identification each written response was assigned a number. Transcription of the responses follows:

0001 This program offers good training. It helped me get my GED. And computer skills. The people here give good advice when you need it.

0002 The only suggestion that I have is that if the type of further education that a student will be receiving after this program is known, then the academic part of this program should be geared toward that, i.e., nursing students will need to learn some very specific mathematics, as well as in electronics, etc.

0003 I think there should be more homework because this is an adult training center and it would help if the person is going on to another school with study habits. Otherwise I would keep everything basically the same.

0004 Well the training program helps you to see different things that are out in this world today, how to defeat them that are in you way. And to educate you more that you can understand the things that you didn't know before.

0005 Well me I think that the Job Readiness program is a good place to start because I think the teachers want to help you out a lot and you can learn things that you might not have no idea about because I did. Also I think it can be a lot of help to people but they just don't know it.

0006 Not as much homework from Mrs. X would be nice. More class participation. I like the idea of the autobio.

0007 This program has a lot of valuable educational benefits that you would most likely need to further yourself. The whole staff works with you to help you with your every need. If you stick with them, they will stick with you.

0008 I truly enjoyed my time in the program. If I had not started there I know I still would be working at Giant Eagle. I am happy that this program was a part of my life. Good luck to you Tom and Thank you for your help.

0009 I personally was pleased with the program and gained a lot, in preparing me with dealing with some personal "demons," I can honestly say because of being here that they are a part of my past. Thank you for all you have given me.

0010 I think it was a good program to go through and learn before you go into your regular courses.

0011 The only comment is that it's all worthwhile & to get what you want out of it. I really enjoyed the Personal Development & the Motivation Skills was a good boost for me. Thank you, Mr. Staszewski, you've made me a better person.

0012 They should dress for success everyday not once, learn computers or get started in that direction if that is what you're taking.

0013 I'd have to say that the relationship between Mr. X and you need to be clarified. I was told two different lines of procedure and ended up feeling lied to. In entering the program more communication with the client and where he's going would be appreciated. One part I wouldn't change is the staff. All are different but they all seem very good with us (above problem excluded).

0015 Everyone!! has been very helpful, kind, & polite--doesn't anyone ever had a bad day!!?? Keep up the good work!!! Mrs. X, how's my spelling???

0016 Motivation is good. I think the instructors should encourage future students to ask questions. Have instructors say they are not mind readers. Let the students know if they don't ask questions, how will the instructors be able to help & guide them.

0017 I really think comprehension is very important. I think your program should do more work on that. If I comprehend what I read better maybe I wouldn't have so much trouble that I'm having now in my course.

0018 I think the program is a good program if you take advantage of what they have to offer, be prompt, get as much out of everyday as you can so you have all your motor skills when you finish the course you're trying to obtain.

0019 I think Math and English are very important to learn or brush up on. And motivation class is great because you should be able to communicate with groups of people.

0020 I would like to thank each and every instructor that had anything to do with teaching me in Job Readiness. I have improved in all aspects of each teaching that I have learned. Being out of school for so long I feel as though I'm ready for the Job market and if I want to further my education. The classes were excellent and I enjoyed the teachers as well as the students. Keep up the excellent work that the instructors are doing and everything will continue to be fine.

0021 I really enjoyed everyone in the job readiness program. They have helped me a lot where I know I can go on and continue my education to earn my degree.

0022 The program was interesting and somewhat informative. I think it should focus more to how to prepare for a job (interviewing) and what to expect on the job (getting along with others, communication, problems with supervisors or co-workers, etc.).

0023 I would suggest they better evaluate each student's needs--for example--if your reading skills and math skills need improvement (you would be put in only those classes)--have each student tell you their weaknesses and have them participate in classes they need.

0024 I think there should be more motivational classes, and classes to where as student's work more as a group and can share the responsibility of being a leader.

0025 It helps you brush up on what you learned so that you can be sharp in whatever you do in life or in school.

0026 I think that it is a great program to start off in. The teachers make you feel at home or rather, like you're not the newest student. They go out of their way to help you and they're always there for you. If I come up with any recommendations or suggestions, I'll feel free to write you and tell you my ideas.

0027 This program has done a great deal for me. And I now feel good about myself because I'm doing something with my life.

0028 I recommend the Program, because it really motivates and sets great moral examples in ones life. I suggest to anyone that has a dream of one day becoming more, don't sit back, apply yourself.

0029 Keep up the good work.

0031 More 1 on 1 with students.

0033 I would like to comment on all the teachers and staff members of the Job Readiness Program. They were so nice, kind, understanding and very helpful. I recommend that any single parent or individual that needs to improve the self-sufficient, esteem skills join the Job Readiness Program. Suggestions--just keep up the work you're doing now and everything have just be moving on in progress for the Job Readiness Program. Thank you kindly Job Readiness Program staff and teachers.

0035 No comment.

0038 Give people enough time in the Job Readiness to learn or brush up their skills.

0039 I like how things are handled. There are really no complaints.

0040 I think this survey should be done upon exit.

0042 The instructors and staff are very helpful and without them I would have never achieved my goal of becoming a student at CCAC Boyce Campus.

0047 The program needs to realize that we are not children and are very capable of making decisions for ourselves. Stop demanding students to attend that really don't need it. Ms. X played a very big part in my tolerance with the program. Some instructors are very insensitive. That offended me. I am in the process of writing a book on my struggles and successes in hope to motivate other young black women who are single mothers on welfare who feel they can't do any better. I feel that welfare is a trap that we have to break loose from. Since the program, I have gotten a job with a Major Medical Billing Corp., I got married, and relocated to South Carolina where my husband and I are temporarily in an apartment while our land gets cleared for our, already approved, $61,000 modular home to be placed. I'm excited about motivating others and that is the purpose of my book. Although I live in S. Carolina, I would be more than happy to speak to a class or two to help stop negative thinking. Oh, I almost forgot, I used to walk from West Mifflin to Braddock to get to the program every day. I now own my own brand new car! I can't remember the name of the motivational classes I attended but, I already thanked God so, thank that instructor for me. His class has had a great impact in my life. P.S. I never did receive a copy of those motivational tapes that he & you promised me.

0051 I had forgotten a lot of basic skills in just a few years of being out of high school. This course made it a lot easier to adapt to studying and learning. It's true when they say

"Don't use it, you'll lose it." I was amazed of what a few months of brush up could really do for me.

0054 Keep up the good work, thanks.

0055 I think the training is great. The math is wonderful. I really wouldn't change anything.

0059 None.

0068 Direct concentration on the program that an individual is preparing for and entrance exams are the most important goals that are met in this program. I would not have passed my entrance exam if it had not been for this program and the very helpful staff. I recommend this program to many friends!

0073 I think the job readiness training was a helpful program. Taking the English, math, and reading classes was help that I needed to brush up on. The motivation classes were a good idea because many students had to be motivated to get and come to the program even though some thought it was boring, but they knew it was something they had to do.

0079 I believe the program would be more sufficient if you made the computer classes to be mandatory. The programs are helpful in some classes. The most dedicated teachers are Mrs. X and Mr. X and I give thanks to them.

0082 Please don't stop the programs. They are so needed in these days for the young people of today. But if only they really want to work hard at studying. If you see they don't want to really learn and not just sit and eat through the whole studying time or class. They don't need to waste space or time, give it to someone who really wants to learn. They should not come and just sit and do nothing, because it's a waste of teacher time and their time, too. There are a lot of young and older, too, that really want to learn. So because of a few who just use the program there are a lot who really appreciate and have learned a lot from the Readiness Training Program, especially me. So don't give up on those who really, really need the program to advance their lives so they can do better in their life. Because without this program I could never have gotten my Diploma or went to CCAC. I have something to fall back on in this life, and that feels so good to have. My life is completed. I have my Diploma, something I always wanted out of this life. No telling how far you can go. Just my opinion--I just have one last thing to say. While I was writing this letter, guess what, I was using a dictionary to spell the words correct. I learned that while going to school. I never leave home without one.

0089 I got my GED at this center and feel that it is a shame it wasn't continued. Also when I came into the program I didn't have much faith in myself or motivation. The program helped me get those things. I especially liked the motivation poems. Also if I need anything I found that I could come back and be assisted to the best ability of the program even though I've completed. Overall it is a good program and I hope others will continue to benefit from it.

0090 The programs are geared toward the needs of the individual. If the person knows what it is that they want, then things will run more smoothly.

0094 I think it is a very good program for anyone who would like to change their life.

0096 Everyone at JR was very helpful and accommodating to me. They were very much willing to lend a helping hand in whatever area I requested or that they felt I needed. In my case JR helped me to get ready for school, ex., getting up every morning with somewhere to go and getting familiar with this daily routine.

0098 I believe the classes could be one on one for those who need more help.

0104 I would recommend the Job Readiness Training Program to anyone who's ready to go back to school or find a job. I know the program helped me out a great deal. I brushed up on my general skills and when I made my next step into my future I was ready for what was waiting for me.

0107 Mrs. A was an excellent English and Reading teacher. I would highly recommend this program to others, because my personal development teachers, Mr. A was one of the kindest persons! He truly was an inspiration to me. He went out of his way and recommended me to my program. He's one of a kind. A humanitarian indeed! Mr. B was a wonderful Motivational person! Mr. C, my math teacher, was an expert teacher in math and algebra! Mr. D was an excellent English and vocabulary teacher. He was so much fun and interesting when he spoke! Ms. B was a lot of help and I enjoyed her company. She had a very nice personality. Mr. E was a big help with career seeking opportunities. Mrs. C was a great help with my resume. Miss D also became a very good friend. Mr. F showed much concern and did his job well. Mrs. A was devoted to her job! She certainly was a good example. I think she showed much concern for each individual student. Mrs. A is one of a kind! I will always remember her beautiful personality and sincere ways! This program certainly was one of the best and most important things I experienced in my life! I highly recommend the Job Readiness Program! I'll always remember it too!

0110 I felt that all the instructors were very supportive and willing to go beyond the call of duty to help me. Even though I got called back to work and wasn't eligible for schooling then, I found the program very beneficial and something I needed in that part of my life. Thank you.

0111 My dealings with the program were quite an experience because at one point I was set to begin a certain program and within a few weeks everything had changed. But the Readiness Program gave the self-esteem and confidence in myself to stand up for what I believe in and not let anything stand in the way of achieving my own goals in life. Don't let others set your goals and career for you.

0113 I would like the entire staff to render their expert and valuable talent to the one who cannot get motivated enough to enroll in CCAC and show the public that pride begins with you and you will always be there for us. I love you all. Thank you so much for everything. If you should use any part of my statements, please do cause I'm proud of each and every one at CCAC Boyce Campus.

0115 When someone has a problem with a student, or if the student is doing something wrong, the teachers should set time aside to talk with the student. They shouldn't wait till it is out of control. This is a really good program. It helped me a whole lot in life and with my children.

0116 Just to keep up the good work. Because there are other people out there that need caring people such as yourselves. I can honestly say that the change in my life would not be without the Job Readiness Program and myself. Thank you for everything. (P.S. me and my daughter will be vacationing next year--smile.)

0118 I have no comment.

0121 None. I think you all are doing a beautiful job. Keep up the good work.

0125 At first I did not feel as though the program would help me much. I had math skills, English and grammar skills, etc., and I didn't think I would learn more than what I already knew. However, the program turned out to be very beneficial to me. I brushed up on my math and English skills and "re-learned" things that were forgotten, but the most valuable learning was the learning about myself, who I was and what my future goals were. The Motivation/Self-Esteem class I believe is the most important class, especially to those with prior education. No matter what you learn in a book or in a class does not motivate you to reach your goals. Facts and figures do not encourage one to do his/her best in reaching those goals. I learned the most from the program's Motivational classes. Without motivation and a good self-esteem, educational efforts may seem distant and difficult to achieve. Everyone needs motivated from time to time and their dreams reinforced by encouragement. The motivational classes helped me very much by encouraging me when I most needed it and I am very appreciative of the instructors in the program who provided that encouragement. I believe that those classes helped everyone the most and should remain part of the program curriculum.

0133 I like the teachers and people who work here. They all seem really sincere and make you feel like they really care a lot. That matters and helps. I like that there's a work at your own pace, and praise for efforts given.

0135 I have none at this particular time. I feel that you have done your job very effectively concerning myself.

0136 It's an excellent program, and I'm sure it will help many more people who want to improve themselves.

0141 I was already focused on the career choice I wanted. My reason for entering the program was to brush up on my math skills. Not enough time was spent on math. Being I was already a part of the work force I felt the classes on Motivation, etc., were a waste of my time. They may be helpful to those who have never worked before or who have problems getting along with other people. Every student should not be forced to take all classes. It should be based on need. The math was helpful but I would have gained more from it, if that was all I learned all day. The English class was very unorganized. I did not gain anything from it. And in some of the classes I was forced to watch movies about Black history and the problems they face (we have problems too!!). I did not feel it was necessary to force it down my throat. And some teachers preached on affirmative action which I feel does not belong in a classroom setting. Being white, I got the feeling some (not all) of the instructors resented me, like I was taking a valuable space away from a black student. I personally did not want to hear this. I just wanted help on my math.

0145 I really liked the program. It brought out my shyness, made me see things much clearer, and also, I communicate more with people.

0148 It was fun. I liked the teachers, especially Mr. X. The program helped me become a better person.

0150 Just keep the type of staff that is already involved in the program.

APPENDIX I

ADDITIONAL DATA - RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Table 1

Improvement in Mathematics Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Fractions, decimals and percents	I learned how to do percents. I can now successfully do fractions, percentages and much more. This part was very helpful. I could do fractions and all those decimals when I went to CCAC.
No change in math	I already had quite a bit of math skills. More like a refresher course for me. The math being taught was too easy for me. I'd write down any answer out of being simply bored.
Algebra	I had to learn algebra and some trigonometry to get accepted into the electronics institute. Algebra became much easier for me. I can do algebra and math equations now.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Problem solving	I got better at how to comprehend word problems. I can solve word problems and formulas. I learned a lot more about measurements.

Table 2

Improvement in Mathematics Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	18	60.0	16	45.7	9	52.9
Fractions, decimals and percents	5	16.7	4	11.4	3	17.6
Algebra	3	10.0	4	11.4	1	5.9
No change in math	2	6.7	4	11.4	1	5.9
Problem solving	1	3.3	7	20.0	3	17.6
Measurement	1	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(30)		(35)		(17)	

Table 3

Improvement in Mathematics Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
No example given	25	49.0	22	61.1
Problem Solving	11	21.6	1	2.8
Algebra	6	11.8	2	5.6
Fractions, decimals and percents	5	9.8	7	19.4
No change in math	4	7.8	3	8.3
Measurement	0	0.0	1	2.8
(n) Responses	(51)		(36)	

Table 4

Improvement in Communications Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Willingness to speak	It's easier for me to talk to people now. I never would say anything. But now I like to talk. The shyness in me towards others has been overcome.
Preparing and delivering a speech	I learned how to give speeches and present speakers. It was a very good boost for me. I am better at giving reports in front of the class. Now I can get up in front of the class and present myself.
Expressing ideas/feelings	I got better at telling people how I feel. Discussing opinions and ideas in class was encouraged. My communication skills improved. I can communicate my ideas better than before.
Grammar/vocabulary	Through class discussion, proper grammar usage was enforced and my skills improved. I learned a lot of new words and am able to understand others easier.
Listening skills	I've learned how to listen. I learned to understand what's on other people's minds and how they feel.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Etiquette of speech	Answering office phones more mannerable.
	Learned how to communicate with others in the workforce.
	I am more careful of what I say and how it may sound to others. Mostly the use of slang.
No change in communication	I don't think they need improvement.
	I always had good communication skills.

Table 5

Improvement in Communication Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	8	25.0	12	31.6	6	31.6
Willingness to speak	8	25.0	9	23.7	5	26.3
Preparing and delivering a speech	6	18.8	6	15.8	4	21.1
Expressing ideas/ feelings	4	12.5	5	13.2	3	15.8
Grammar/vocabulary	2	6.3	3	7.9	0	0.0
Listening skills	2	6.3	2	5.3	0	0.0
Etiquette of speech	1	3.1	1	3.1	0	0.0
No change in communication	1	3.1	0	0.0	1	5.3
(n) Responses	(32)		(38)		(19)	

Table 6

Improvement in Communication Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
Willingness to speak	15	26.8	8	21.1
Preparing and delivering a speech	13	23.2	3	7.9
No example given	12	21.4	15	39.5
Expressing ideas/ feelings	7	12.5	7	18.4
Grammar/vocabulary	4	7.1	1	2.6
Listening skills	2	3.6	2	5.3
Etiquette of speech	2	3.6	1	2.6
No change in communication	1	1.8	1	2.6
(n) Responses	(56)		(38)	

Table 7

Improvement in Self-Esteem Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Self-confidence	I am not as nervous about speaking to others. My family and friends can even tell and see my improvement. I am more motivated, determined, and self-sufficient. I believe in myself now.
No change in self-esteem	I don't have a problem with self-esteem. I've already had self-esteem. I've always felt pretty good about myself.
Setting personal goals	I have set goals that I want to reach. I made it through job readiness and got accepted to nurse's training. I benefited most in this area and that allowed me to keep my goals ahead of me.
Positive outlook	I feel I am doing something with my life now. The teachers always had faith in my potential. I always felt up after the instructor's class. I feel great about myself and think positive things.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Respecting others	It shows me that I have to respect everyone, no matter how that person is. If you respect other people, they'll respect you.
Discovering self	I learned a lot about myself and how I felt. I found out that I could do things I didn't think I could.

Table 8

Improvement in Self-Esteem Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
Self-confidence	11	34.4	13	37.1	6	35.3
No example given	10	31.3	15	42.9	5	29.4
No change in self-esteem	4	12.5	2	5.7	3	17.6
Setting personal goals	3	9.4	1	2.9	3	17.6
Positive outlook	2	6.3	2	5.7	0	0.0
Respecting others	1	3.1	1	2.9	0	0.0
Discovering self	1	3.1	1	2.9	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(32)		(35)		(17)	

Table 9

Improvement in Self-Esteem Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
Self-confidence	22	41.5	11	30.6
No example given	16	30.2	16	44.4
Setting personal goals	6	11.3	1	2.8
No change in self-esteem	5	9.4	4	11.1
Positive outlook	3	5.7	1	2.8
Respecting others	1	1.9	1	2.8
Discovering self	0	0.0	2	5.6
(n) Responses	(53)		(36)	

Table 10

Improvement in Motivation Level Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
No change in motivation level	I am very motivated. This program has not enhanced that. I already had the motivation. I knew what I wanted before I got there so my motivation stayed the same.
Determination to achieve	While I am very tired, I know that also is a temporary situation and I remained determined to finish this goal. With the determination and the teaching they give you, you cannot fail. I learned that I have to keep working hard for what I want until I get it.
Setting attainable goals	Now I am able to set goals and achieve them. Before the program, I did not know how to set goals. Now I set goals at home and at school. I have set short and long-term goals for myself and working hard at getting them.

Table 11

Improvement in Motivation Level Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	11	36.7	15	45.5	7	41.2
Determination to achieve	11	36.7	11	33.3	6	35.3
Setting attainable goals	6	20.0	7	21.2	2	11.8
No change in motivation level	2	6.7	0	0.0	2	11.8
(n) Responses	(30)		(33)		(17)	

Table 12

Improvement in Motivation Level Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
No example given	19	38.0	15	42.9
Determination to achieve	17	34.0	13	37.1
Setting attainable goals	10	20.0	7	20.0
No change in motivation level	4	8.0	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(50)		(35)	

Table 13

Improvement in Leadership Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
No change in leadership	I always had strong leadership skills. I don't like to be in the leadership role. Not much opportunity for it (leadership). They are the same as before.
Confidence/assertiveness	I feel that I have more self-esteem in myself to be a good leader and teach someone what I have learned. I felt more comfortable in giving my opinion and leading class discussion. The program showed me that I can be a leader and not a follower and it's working much better. I learned how to take charge and speak up for myself.
Influencing others	I learned to help and lead others when no one else is there to help. I can do things and influence others to do the same.
Communication skills	I was better able to come up with topics, give my input and listen to others given their input. I was more effective when giving reports in front of the class.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Communication skills (cont.)	I improved a lot in communication.
Delegating authority	A good leader can delegate authority and still be in charge.

Table 14

Improvement in Leadership Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	18	60.0	16	47.1	8	47.1
No change in leadership	6	20.0	1	2.9	2	11.8
Confidence/ assertiveness	5	16.7	11	32.4	7	41.2
Influencing others	1	3.3	3	8.8	0	0.0
Communication skills	0	0.0	2	5.9	0	0.0
Delegating authority	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(30)		(34)		(17)	

Table 15

Improvement in Leadership Skills Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
No example given	26	51.0	20	57.1
Confidence/assertiveness	15	29.4	9	25.7
No change in leadership	5	9.8	4	11.4
Influencing others	2	3.9	2	5.7
Communication skills	2	3.9	0	0.0
Delegating authority	1	2.0	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(51)		(35)	

Table 16

Improvement in Effectiveness Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants

Area of improvement	Sample statements
No change in effectiveness	I have always been effective on the job. My effectiveness hasn't changed at all. Not enough opportunity for it.
Confidence/motivation	They taught me how not to be afraid and how to have confidence in myself. Although I am still unemployed, I know that I possess the qualities that an employer looks for. I am now more motivated to find work.
Organizational/stress management skills	Put things in order and adjust to your job setting in order to succeed. I was not as stressed at my job as much as before. I have become more organized at home and now I keep myself on a regular schedule.
Interview/job search skills	I learned a lot about interviews and how to communicate well. I learned what to wear and how to present myself at an interview. The staff taught us what to say, wear, and how to act on an interview.

(table continues)

Area of improvement	Sample statements
Working with others	I like going to work everyday because I like people. I learned working on an effective team will always find resolution to a problem.

Table 17

Improvement in Effectiveness Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for Employment Status

	Employed (31)		Seeking Employment (35)		Not Seeking Employment (19)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%	n	%
No example given	21	67.7	18	54.5	7	41.2
No change in effectiveness	3	9.7	1	3.0	3	17.6
Organizational/stress management skills	2	6.5	2	6.1	4	23.5
Interview/job search skills	2	6.5	3	9.1	2	11.8
Confidence/ motivation	2	6.5	9	27.3	0	0.0
Working with others	1	3.2	0	0.0	1	5.9
(n) Responses	(31)		(33)		(17)	

Table 18

Improvement in Effectiveness Cited by Job Readiness Program Participants for School Enrollment Status

	Currently enrolled (50)		Not enrolled (35)	
Area of improvement	n	%	n	%
No example given	21	42.0	26	72.2
Confidence/motivation	10	20.0	3	8.3
No change in effectiveness	6	12.0	1	2.8
Organizational/stress management skills	6	12.0	4	11.1
Interview/job search skills	5	10.0	2	5.6
Working with others	2	4.0	0	0.0
(n) Responses	(50)		(36)	

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